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The Buddha's Light International Association - BLIA
The International Buddhist Progress Society - IBPS
Buddhist Churches of America - BCA
Friends of the Western Buddhist Order - FWBO
Buddhist Association of the Republic of China - BAROC

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Thesis Statement

There has long been a tradition of "Eastern" research and intellectual curiosity in Europe and North America, and this has helped to place the religious and philosophical ideas of Asia within the mainstream of Western thought. One such religious tradition that has had an overwhelming impact on the hearts and minds of those living in the West is the Buddhist philosophy[1]. In the West, Buddhists come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and classes, thus accounting for the proliferation of Westerners who identify themselves as Buddhist in one form or another. Perhaps the most significant (and largest) segment of this group is composed of members of the Asian populace, many of whom emigrated from China and Japan and have practised Buddhism in the West for four or five generations. Further to this, there is also a substantial group of convert Buddhists from a wide range of Western and non-Western backgrounds who have recently turned their hearts and minds toward Buddhism and Buddhist practices. Finally, there are recent immigrant and refugee Buddhists, those members who, having arrived from a range of Asian nations, are now in the process of transplanting and adapting their received traditions to their new situation in North America, and more specifically, Canada.

Anthony D. Smith (1991: 4) has argued in *National Identity* that the self is comprised of numerous identities and roles, each of which is based on social classifications. Two such immutable categories that are often inextricably and undeniably linked are religion and ethnic identity, both of which are universal and pervasive, as they must include more than one class or culture in order to survive. As Smith (1991: 6) himself contends, religious identity often emerges from the realms of communication and socialization: "they are based on alignments of culture and its elements – values, symbols, myths and traditions…[which] have therefore tended to join in a single community of the faithful all those who feel they share certain symbolic codes, value systems and traditions of belief in ritual". It is in this manner that religious communities are markedly connected to ethnic identities. Among Chinese immigrants in

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[1] I am referring to Buddhism in general here. In the following chapters I will discuss the origin of Buddhism in India and its subsequent spread through Asia, and eventually the West.

Canada, participation in religious organizations based in their nation of origin has encouraged a strong sense of religious tradition and self-awareness both as individuals and as a collective.

Research Question and Thesis Objectives

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of Buddhism in the lives of Chinese immigrants in Edmonton and Vancouver, along with the conscious decisions religious leaders have made regarding the adaptation and modernization of Buddhism in the West.[2] Carolyn Chen (2002) has argued that much of the older literature on new immigrant religion has been focused on what happens within religious institutions, while little attention has been given to the public presence of these groups or to the relationship with those who remain outside of the institutional walls of Buddhist organizations. As Chen points out, much of this literature speaks to the theme of the immigrant religious institutions as an ethnic stronghold (one where immigrants can communally practise, preserve, and pass down their ethnic traditions), while little has discussed the fact that changes and developments are constantly undertaken as the philosophies and practices are adapted to North American religious life. My research speaks to this aspect of religious study in Canada and it demonstrates that, like other associations and institutions within an immigrant community, these Buddhist organizations fill a need for communal solidarity while attempting to expand their reach beyond the Chinese communities they originated in.

Organizations such as the Buddha's Light International Association (a blanket organization covering both Fo Guang Shan and the International Buddhist Progress Society) and The Compassionate Relief Tzu Chi Foundation are world religious organizations based out of Taiwan that are working towards modernizing and adapting their beliefs and practices to each new community in which they settle. While these two groups have had diverse approaches to this adaptation, their goals have been very much the same: to create a Buddhist philosophy that is appropriate and sustainable within a social and economic climate that is very distinct from the one from which it emerged. It is through the systematic and precise incorporation of Western philosophies and traditions that these two groups have, with very different motives and goals, attempted to gain a substantial non-Asian membership base. Yet, given the evidence that supports the link between religious practice and ethnic solidarity among immigrants in host societies, the obvious question is: are these Buddhist groups succeeding in their goal to reach across ethnic boundaries in order to create global multi-cultural Buddhist organizations?

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[2] There are a number of terms that are frequently used within anthropological writings that are rarely defined, thus becoming unnecessarily confusing and complicated. Throughout the course of this thesis I have chosen to include a number of these terms, and I believe rather than continue the cycle of confusion it would be prudent to define my own definition of these terms. 1. Globalization: I have used this term to describe the efforts made by religious organizations at establishing chapters in locations across the globe. 2. Modernization: this term is used in reference to the efforts made by religious organizations to modify and adapt traditional philosophies and practices in order to reach a broader audience. 3. Assimilation: I have tried to avoid this term, as it often brings negative connotations with it. When it is used, I am referring to the absorption of one tradition into another. 4. Syncretism: this is a concept that describes the blending of distinct religious practices (i.e. Chinese Buddhists practicing Confucian respect for ancestors). 5. Ethnicity: a complex concept that is best described as an individual or group's recognition of belonging within a cultural collectively that has a shared sense of history, religion, customs, language, or institutions.

My research demonstrates that the results of these adaptations are falling short of the intended goal. Instead of a stream of Western converts melding with a group of assimilated immigrants, members of these organizations are recreating and maintaining ethnic strongholds in which members focus on expansion within the group rather than expansion to non-Asian members. There has certainly been expansion and growth within the Buddha's Light International Association and the Tzu Chi Foundation, accomplished through specialized, dramatic efforts in modernization and recruitment strategies. This notwithstanding, such accomplishments must be recognized for what they are: Buddhist movements pushed forth by the strength of ethnicity, rapidly expanding to countries around the world – yet not expanding to non-Asian communities around the world.

The data for this thesis were collected in Edmonton and Vancouver from January 2002 to February 2003, with a brief visit back to the field in October and November 2003. I began my preliminary research through a pilot study on the Chinese Buddhist groups who have adapted and modernized their philosophy in order to recruit new members from their host society. The issue of immigrant religion in Canada is a complicated one, and Buddhism specifically is important to the Chinese communities in Edmonton and Vancouver. These particular cities were chosen during my preliminary research based on both their similarities and their contrasts. For instance, while both communities have a strong sense of ethnic identity and a large Buddhist membership base, in Vancouver the Chinese communities are not only much larger and older than their Edmonton counterparts, but they are also more influential both financially and politically.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Following the Introduction, Chapter Two gives a detailed literature review of the primary and secondary sources related to the subjects of religious and ethnic identity, the origin of Buddhism and its spread to the West, and Taiwanese Buddhism. This chapter includes a brief historical discussion on the development and rise of Buddhism as it spread through both mainland China and Taiwan, thus providing the reader with the background information that is needed to understand the significance of later adaptations to Chinese Buddhism. Similarly, this chapter furnishes the reader with historical accounts and present-day data of Buddhism in North America, focusing on how Western converts have adapted the religion, as well as how Chinese immigrant groups in North America have used Buddhism to create and maintain ethnic solidarity within their host communities. In Chapter Three I provide a detailed account of the sampling process and methodology that I employed in my data collection and analysis. I also briefly discuss the results of my original pilot study, and the limitations and difficulties that I encountered during both my months of fieldwork, and the process of gathering the necessary textual research.

Chapter Four allows for the discussion of my field work results. It is here that I am able to provide detailed documentation of my two chosen case studies. My discussion of The Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation examines the adaptations that have been made, along with the outreach that has taken place, through the efforts of its members in British Columbia and Alberta. Similarly, my examination of the Buddha's Light International Association focuses on the belief system and goals of this group, and more specifically its membership in Edmonton and Vancouver. These two case studies provide insight and understanding into how Chinese Buddhism has been modernized and adapted by group leaders in order to reach beyond its nation of origin and into the communities of those immigrants living in the West. Finally, in Chapter Five I discuss the results of my analysis and data collection in relation to larger questions, the process involved in the globalization of religious organizations, and the resulting effect on immigrant religious practices.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Religion and Ethnic Identity

The information flowing westwards from the cultures of India, China, and Japan has provided not merely amusement and diversion, but instead has become a vehicle for serious self-questioning and self-renewal. As J.J. Clarke (1997: 6) contends in his book *Oriental Enlightenment*, this self-questioning provides an external reference point from which to direct the light of critical inquiry into Western traditions and belief systems, and with which to inspire new possibilities. During the last decades of the twentieth century, the converts and the immigrant groups held center stage in Western Buddhism. According to Buddhist scholars such as Snelling (1987), Seager (1999), and Strong (2002) these groups have given Buddhist teachings in the West much of its vibrancy and complexity. As Strong (2002) points out, for the first time in history we are witnessing adherents of Theravada, Zen, Pure Land, and other schools of Buddhism coexisting together in a single culture. Nevertheless, approaches used by the members of such groups in adapting Buddhism to the West differ radically due to their relationship with the traditions and their location within Western society. For instance, while many converts first discovered Buddhism in books or set out to find Buddhist teachers in the West, a few traveled as far as Asia to learn more about the tradition from established Buddhist masters. By the 1980s, converts began to speak in their own voices when a generation of native-born Westerners moved into prominence as scholars, teachers, and community leaders.

During these same years, immigrant Buddhists were also creating new forms of Buddhist teachings that were better suited to their new home in the West, but they were doing so out of a very different social situation. In this instance, the development of Western Buddhism was approached as a part of the immigrant experience - one in which questions about adapting a religion to the West were closely related to a broad range of economic, cultural, and linguistic issues (Seager 1999, Strong 2002). The first generation of immigrants needed to find work, recreate their religious life, and explain this religious life to their rapidly westernizing children. It is because of these issues that the long-term contribution of immigrants to Buddhism in the West is difficult to assess without a historical and cultural framework. The nature of the immigrant experience is such that the adaptation of a given tradition occurs over the course of several generations.

It is long accepted among academics that all religions define the nature of reality and the meaning of space, time, and history through the use of myths, doctrines, symbols, and ecclesiastical structures, and, as Kitagawa (1987: 43) contends, this theory is well suited to cross-cultural, cross-national universalistic religions. Such religions tend to incorporate specific characteristic religious emphases of individual groups while universalizing them into a larger religious backdrop. Consequently, as Buddhism encounters the prevailing circumstances of the modern world, its followers are impelled to confront the issue of combining traditional practices with the necessary living experience of Buddhism in action. As Kitagawa (1987: 205) argues, it is through this process that Buddhism has rediscovered its religious integrity and common heritage – despite the very real fact that there are numerous factors working against such a direction. Furthermore, even as differing forms of Buddhism exist side by side in North America and, in many instances, abroad, Buddhism survives in part due to the "intra-Buddhist" dialogue it promotes and the syncretistic combination of different traditions (Strong, 2002: 339).

Compromise and adaptation has been particularly important within the Chinese and Taiwanese populations in the West. However, because of their careful adaptations of Buddhist philosophy, the practices of global Buddhist groups have been largely ignored by religious scholars, who have favored instead those forms of Buddhism that have an easily traceable literary heritage. Thus, while the place of religion in the modern world has been the subject of numerous contradictory evaluations, it is only in the last decade that scholars such as Robinson and Johnson (1997), Nagata (1999), Seager (1999), and Strong (2002) have begun to examine those religious organizations that have modernized and adapted their traditional beliefs and scriptures in order to fit into a world impacted by modernity and globalization. The conventional predictions of the imminent decline of religion under the pressures of such forces have been placed against modern observations that recognize the adaptability and resilience of religion, which often appear in non-traditional and less recognizable forms. Judith Nagata (1999: 23) is one modern academic who has begun to turn towards prolonged study of the effects of globalization on religious groups today. Nagata has argued that today we find ourselves at a stage in which world religions can expand their territorial reach and test their universality, even as they must appeal to local and indigenous cultural needs. Similarly, John S. Strong (2002) has followed on the heels of Robinson and Johnson (1997), focusing briefly on new forms of engaged Buddhism, practised by groups such as the Tzu Chi Foundation and their methods of reaching out globally rather than seeking individual refuge in a turbulent world.

Indeed, this is a time when religions are placed against an invasive global market in which extensive transmigrations involve unfamiliar religious communities living side by side in alien cultural settings. Nagata (1999: 231) believes that one measure of a universal religion is its success in "going local" without losing its essential character and identity. This in turn makes any prescriptive line between the local and global difficult to define in both belief and practice. Religious organizations such as the Buddha's Light International Association and the Tzu Chi Foundation have succeeded in completing this difficult process. One of the most prominent developments on the global religious scene is the need to come to terms with the urgent and demanding issues that are constantly changing in the secular world. Globalization, however, involves more than just territorial expansion. Nagata (1999) and Strong (2002) have argued that those religions which aspire to 'world status' must also take positions and act on such issues as human rights, the status of refugees, the fight for world peace, the protection of the environment, and so on. According to Nagata (1999: 231), such groups must also adjust to the prevailing market forces of the society that they inhabit.

Arjun Appadurai (2000) has similarly argued that while in the past the forces of cultural gravity seemed to pull away from the formation of large-scale ecumenes (whether religious, commercial, or political), sometime in the last few decades the nature of this gravitational field has shifted through the forces of mass media and mass migrations. The result of this shift is the success of organizations like BLIA and the Tzu Chi Foundation, and the changing social, territorial, and cultural reproductions of their group identities and the group identities of their followers. As these groups migrate and regroup in new locations, they also reconstruct their histories and reconfigure their ethnic projects. Thus, as Appadurai (2000: 48) argues, the "ethno" in ethnography takes on a complicated, nonlocalized quality – one to which we, as anthropologists, must respond. Consequently, since the ethnoscapes (the landscapes of group identity) have changed from tightly territorialized and culturally homogeneous groups, our research foci must change as well. In order to study transnational organizations, my research must move beyond a discussion of a particular group in one locale, and instead include the group's changing influences in their homeland, as well as their influences in the West.

It is certainly true that, generally speaking, research has demonstrated that religion continues to be important for new immigrant populations, and that it continues to provide an important social space for expressing ethnic differences. Nevertheless, Fenggang Yang and Helen Rose Ebaugh (2001: 367) have demonstrated that religious organizations serve ethnic reproduction and assimilation functions as immigrants continue to adopt the Western context. Certainly, however, immigrant groups in North America differ in the ways in which they emphasize and integrate religion into their ethnic identity. While some immigrant religious communities emphasize their members' religious identity more than their ethnic core, many groups choose to stress ethnic identity while also using their religious institution as a means of preserving cultural traditions and ethnic boundaries. As Smith (1991: 28) has argued, "ethnic identity…develops when religious movements burst across ethnic frontiers and [have] founded great supraterritorial organizations, Buddhist, Catholic, [and so on]".

Yang and Ebaugh (2001: 373) discuss the impact of majority and minority status in the home and host countries of new immigrants. They point out the importance of understanding the strategies concerning the link between religion and ethnic identity, as well as the success of these strategies. Their study illuminated an aspect of my own research that I had previously been unaware of. For example, according to Yang and Ebaugh (2001), the majority status of Buddhism in Taiwan and other Chinese societies is directly related to the high proportion of immigrants in Buddhist organizations in North America. For such immigrants, it would be seen as simply 'natural' to attend a Chinese Buddhist temple in their new country. Many of these temple members had previously been Buddhist members in their home country. For other Chinese immigrants, however (especially those who are highly educated or professionals), conversion to ethnic churches occurs in North America due to the influence of friends and relatives. Yang and

Ebaugh (2001: 374) point out that such conversions through family and friends most often take place due to the recent revival of Buddhism in their home country. In fact, religious belonging and the practice of religion are not only conditioned by conceptions of belief. Ian Reader (1991: 12) points out that, in the case of Japan, within many religious organizations, members experience a high level of belonging and a low level of cognitive belief. Reader argues the importance of the household as a socio-religious unit as a force that exerts influence over its members. Reader's argument applies to circumstances in China as well, as is demonstrated by the work of C.K. Yang. Yang (1961) contends that the influence of religion on Chinese family life is visible everywhere, and is particularly evident during times of crisis, special events, or traditional festival days when the home becomes a complex center of religious worship. Yang (1961: 37) contends that in China, religion is used to reinforce the organizational foundation of a family.

In the West, Buddhism is seen by many to be a new religious movement that has gained a growing membership of non-immigrants since the 1960s. Although Buddhism is still clearly a minority religion in North America, for some it is precisely because of its distinctness that Buddhism is attractive. Many westerners who are "turned off" by their parents' religion turn to Buddhism in a search for "authentic otherness" (Yang & Ebaugh, 2001: 375). Nevertheless, most ethnic churches are initially established in order to meet the needs of the original immigrant generation. During this initial stage, the services and activities of the religious group are naturally dominated by the language and clergy from the home country. Mark R. Mullins (1987: 323) contends that at this point of development, the strong leadership of the first generation, with their cultural and linguistic differences, provides the motivation and resources necessary for the establishment of ethnic churches. It is only natural that if the existing religious institutions within a host society do not provide services in the language of Chinese immigrants, there would be new ethnic churches created in order to serve the needs of the group.

Canadian sociologists have emphasized the traditional functions of religious organizations among ethnic groups in a modern, pluralistic society such as Canada. Mullins (1988: 217) explains in his discussion of ethnic churches in Canada, that from this standpoint minority churches are regarded as an important social source for the persistence of ethnicity. Fishman (1972), on the other hand, has argued that ethnic churches are primarily adapting organizations. This line of thought assumes that the powerful forces of assimilation will invariably transform an ethnic group over the course of generations. From Fishman's perspective, the more successful a group becomes, which is determined largely by membership numbers, the more de-ethnicized it becomes. The acculturation of locally-born generations will eventually force ethnic churches and temples to choose between accommodation and extinction. The age of the immigrant population plays a significant role in the transformation of ethnic churches, since the younger generation of immigrants is often drawn towards the religion and culture of their host community (Fishman, 1972: 50). For Chinese in the West this means that many young people are drawn towards Christianity, or the growing Western view that membership in a religious group is unnecessary.

Milton M. Gordon (1964) has proposed that with the cultural assimilation of later generations and the inevitable language shift, ethnic churches enter a new stage of development – one that makes organizational change necessary in a variety of areas. Gordon explains that in most cases bilingual leaders must be recruited and additional English language services must be added. In addition, English educational services need to be offered in order to provide new members with the necessary religious socialization (Gordon, 1964: 72). Mullins (1988: 218) has argued that one feature that all ethnic churches in North America have in common is the need to adapt to increasingly acculturated generations. According to this argument, the ability that these churches and temples have to adapt is directly related to the size of the minority group, the source of religious leaders, and the structure of religious authority. Some ethnic groups (like the Chinese in North America) are relatively large, and have thus been able to establish an indigenous structure of religious authority, as well as a source of religious leaders within the host society. If ethnic churches are linked to a larger indigenous religious organization, then they have access to a host of resources, which in turn puts them in a better position to make the necessary adaptations for successive generations to remain in the Church (Mullins, 1988: 218).

Richard H. Hall (1972: 92) maintains that ethnic churches "have a choice between going out of business or developing a new goal". According to this line of reasoning, if ethnic churches de-ethnicize their religious traditions and broaden their base of relevance, then there is a possibility for the survival of the organizations. In order to both recruit Westerners and acculturate members of the ethnic group in question, ethnic churches must broaden their original goal and include members of the host society. Certainly there are many ethnic churches that may not consciously modify their original goals or purpose. Mullins (1987: 327) explains that "as accommodations are made to English-speakers, and as mixed-marriages are incorporated within these churches, congregations may slowly make the transition from an ethnic to a multiethnic organization". In this instance, the structural assimilation is a natural byproduct of Western influence. As Strong (2002: 340) illustrates, among immigrants Buddhism is tied to a sense of cultural identity, while among non-Asian converts it is often used as a means of forming a new identity or an integrated secular outlook. Further, it is the children of immigrants that are in the most significant position, choosing between using Buddhism as a means of holding on to or rediscovering their cultural identity, or simply jettisoning the religion altogether. In the instance of world-Buddhist organizations such as BLIA and the Tzu Chi Foundation, however, there is a great deal of planning involved in the process of adaptation. The disappearance of the original immigrant members that takes place due to geographic and upward mobility often leads to gradual membership loss among ethnic churches. Within BLIA and the Tzu Chi Foundation, enough new members are recruited from the host society that this gradual membership loss of original immigrant members has left the organizations unaffected.

Fenggang Yang (1999: 17) has argued that recently, "the conceptualization of assimilation and ethnicity are leading to the construction of an integrated theory that recognizes immigrant assimilation as occurring within North American pluralism and increasing transnationalism". In the process of attaining Western identity and retaining ethnic identity, religion may play an important role because religion itself is a powerful source of personal identity. The religious community, where face-to-face interactions are frequent, serves as an important social mechanism in the construction of identities. In fact, the close relationship between religion and ethnicity has long been recognized by sociologists (Durkheim 1947, Weber 1961), but not truly appreciated until the 1970s –

and only recently has the complexity of the relationship become a focus of analysis (Yang, 1999: 28). Amid the ethnic revival movements in the 1970s, many scholars began to place emphasis on the role of religion in creating and maintaining ethnicity. For instance, Andrew M. Greeley (1971: 82) argued that "a more fruitful way of viewing the situation is to acknowledge that religion and ethnicity are intertwined, that religion plays an ethnic function in American society, and ethnicity has powerful religious overtones".[3]

The religious factor in ethnic formation is further strengthened by the migration experience. The acts of uprooting, migration, and repeated settlement often produce heightened sentiments of religious commitment in the minds of new Westerners. The interviews that I conducted provided many instances of individuals who joined BLIA or Tzu Chi in Canada because of previous membership in their home country – or at least because they had already been Buddhist. Empirical studies of various immigrant groups have demonstrated that the immigrant church often serves as both an agency for assimilation, and a means for preserving traditional ethnic cultures (Yang, 1999: 31). In *An Understanding of Japanese Religion,* Joseph M. Kitagawa (1987: 204) correctly contends that religion has both universal and particular elements, "precisely because the universal elements of religion must be communicated, the universal must be particularized and the particular must be universalized if religion is to be meaningful at all". It is his contention that while Buddhism has historically stressed the particular its universality has not diminished. Consistently tolerant towards local existing religions and cultures, Kitagawa suggests that its method of presenting itself as a "supplement" rather than a competitor has added to Buddhism's universal success.

Origin of Buddhism and Its Spread to the West

Arjun Appadurai (2000: 3) has written that one of the most problematic legacies of Western social science is that it has steadfastly reinforced the sense of a single moment (the "modern moment"), which by its appearance has created a dramatic, unprecedented break between the past and the present. However, the world in which we presently reside cannot possibly involve a general break with the historical traditions of the past. Appadurai's description of the world today, as one that is irregularly self-conscious and unevenly experienced, is both correct and apt. The transmission of Buddhism from India to China, from China to Taiwan, and from Taiwan and China to the West, is a phenomenon that dramatically demonstrates the argument against an abrupt break between past and present. For over 2500 years Buddhism has played a central role in the religious life of Asia, and for centuries it has taken on various shapes as it has been adapted to numerous cultures and regions. This process has repeated itself as Buddhism has undergone its journey to the West. It is essential in understanding this process to have some knowledge of the basic teachings of the Buddhist tradition, and along with this, a basic grounding in the vocabulary that is used within the Western Buddhist communities in North America today.

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[3] Greeley (1971) identified three types of the relationship between religion and ethnicity: 1. Some religious people do not hold an ethnic identity. 2. Some people have an ethnic identity but are not religious. 3. But in most cases, religious belief and ethnicity are intertwined.

According to Buddhist mythology and hagiography, over 2500 years ago a young prince of India named Siddhartha Gautama (563-483 BCE) renounced all his ties to his noble birth. Siddhartha left his wife and child in order to seek his release from suffering, which he understood to be an inescapable part of life. As Allen Richardson (1985) explains in his book *East Comes West*, Siddhartha's path to this release (or enlightenment) was an arduous one. He first studied the great systems of *yoga*, and then followed the teachings of various *gurus*. Finally, Siddhartha practised physical austerities that brought him almost to the point of death. Regardless of all these tireless efforts, none of these actions brought Siddhartha any closer to a release from the cycle of birth, rebirth, and suffering. It was only after a period of prolonged meditation that he finally achieved release (*nirvana*) (Richardson, 1985: 51). From then on, Siddhartha became known as the Buddha, or the Enlightened One.

While researching the Tzu Chi Foundation, I was given the Buddhist text, *The Blueprint of Happiness: An Outline of the Buddha's Teaching*, by one of the laymembers of this organization. In this text it explains that in the first sermon the Buddha gave after attaining his enlightenment he explained the path of the "Middle Way". The Middle Way is the path of moderation, the path of balance. The Buddha warned against abandoning ourselves to a pleasure-seeking life and the "unbridled gratification of the senses" (Bhikkhu Anoma Mahinda, 7). On the other hand, the Buddha also warned against a useless life of painful and unnecessary austerity or asceticism. The Middle Way has since become a way of life for countless Buddhists throughout much of Asia and the West. Master Hsing Yun of the Buddha's Light International writes about the Middle Way in many of his books. In his discussions on Buddhism, Hsing Yun (1990: 27) writes that the teachings of the Ch'an and Pure Land Schools, the doctrine of the unity of form and emptiness, and the Middle Way are all instances of Humanistic Buddhism. At the foundation of each of these teachings are several basic philosophical truths. Borrowing the Hindu concept of *dharma* (moral law or truth), the core of these teachings includes four basic assumptions about the human condition. Among all Buddhist sects these became known as the Four Noble Truths, and are seen by many to form the important basis of the Buddhist life (anon., 1997: 35).[4]

The Fourth Noble Truth is the Eightfold Path, which contains within it a complete system of morality and a path that leads one to the deliverance from suffering. This path is the Buddhist code of mental and physical conduct, which leads to the end of suffering, sorrow, and despair, and allows one to reach enlightenment (anon., 1997: 35).[5] By disciplining the mind and detaching it from either anxiety or pleasure, devotees learn to still their thoughts. In addition, they learn to act gently and compassionately without seeking satisfaction from what they do. The result of this effort and behavior is the ability to extinguish desire and gradually disengage from the cycle of birth, rebirth, and suffering (Richardson, 1985: 55). These basic tenets are held by Buddhist groups around the world, and these traditional beliefs remain unchanged by groups like BLIA and the Tzu Chi Foundation even through their efforts at modernization. As Nagata (1999: 237) explains, even as Buddhism adapts itself to its surroundings, there still persists a core of essential beliefs and practices in the cosmology of the dharma: of karma as the elemental law of cause and effect, of basic ethical precepts and codes of conduct, and of the acceptance of the continuity of a tradition that connects present Buddhists with the earliest founders, monastics, and teachers.

The foundations of Western Buddhism rest on a variety of national, regional, and sectarian traditions of Asian Buddhism. There are numerous forms of Buddhism in Asia, yet there are three broad traditions that have structured Buddhist thought and practice for many centuries (Theravada, Mahayana, and Vijrayana). These three traditions are often referred to as *yanas*, or the vehicles that lead people from samsara (the cycle of rebirth) to nirvana (release). All three traditions are currently flourishing in the West, but communication among them is limited both by ethnic and sectarian differences inherited from Asia, and the gulf that tends to separate Buddhist converts and immigrants (Seager, 1999: 21). Perhaps the presence of these various traditions in the West will provide an opportunity for greater mutual understanding among all of these groups, and for the emergence of new forms of Buddhism that are suited to the needs of the West and Western society. The specific traditions that are important to my study are those which are directly related to BLIA and the Tzu Chi Foundation. What follows is a brief description of these Buddhist philosophies.

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[4] The Four Noble Truths are: the Universal Nature of Suffering; the Origin of Suffering; the Extinction or Cure of Suffering; and, the Path which leads to the End of Suffering (the Eightfold Path).

[5] The Eightfold Path is made up of: Right understanding; right thoughts; right speech; right actions; right livelihood; right effort; right mindfulness; and, right concentration.

Mahayana Buddhism

The "Great Vehicle" began to emerge around 100 CE, as a set of distinct emphases in the interpretation of the Buddha's teachings. The innovations that are central to Mahayana Buddhism later became dominant in China, Vietnam, Japan, and Korea. The tradition took the name "Great Vehicle" because its proponents saw the orthodoxy of Theravada Buddhism as too narrow and too difficult (Seager, 1999: 24). As Mahayana spread outside of the Indian subcontinent it incorporated elements drawn from Taoism, Confucianism, Shintoism, and other indigenous traditions that were found throughout Northern and Eastern Asia. In the West, many Buddhists (whether converts, immigrants, or old-line ethnics) are part of this popular Buddhist tradition. The humanistic Buddhism of BLIA and the Tzu Chi Foundation falls squarely into the realm of Mahayana Buddhism, especially given the fact that the goal of these organizations is to help all of humankind rather than merely seeking enlightenment for themselves.

Central to Mahayana Buddhism is the *bodhisattva,* who aspires to buddhahood but remains within the cycle of samsara. The bodhisattva contains both supreme enlightenment and a compassionate concern for all beings (as opposed to the *arhat*, who seeks only his own enlightenment) [Hsing Yun, 2001b: 11]. On the level of practice this emphasis gave rise to the pledge of the bodhisattva, in which a person on the path to enlightenment would forego liberation until such time as all people become free of suffering. Many Western Buddhists are now applying Mahayana ideas about the interdependence of all beings to environmental and social concerns, and thus see in these beliefs a spiritual complement to modern scientific theories about ecology and astrophysics. Hsing Yun (2001a), specifically, has an entire booklet dedicated to how Mahayana Buddhism is related to Western psychology. In it, he explains that in today's society, psychology is applied to education, industry, business, health care, science, the arts, and even sports. Psychology in the West is used to study the development of personality and the determinants of behavior, yet because of its inherent limitations Western psychology has been only partially successful in personality transformation and improvement. To Hsing Yun, the addition of Buddhism – a religion that understands the psychological nature of human beings – will allow the development of new, effective methods of treatment.

Mahayana Buddhism has long been viewed as a major influence in the West, yet within the tradition there are many distinct lineages, sects, and movements. In Chinese Mahayana Buddhism in particular, there are many philosophical systems and regional traditions that are eclectic in both their approach and their practice. As a consequence, Chinese Buddhism in the West is known for its diversity and its complexity of expression (Seager, 1999, Strong, 2002). The major Mahayana sects that are relevant to this research project are Pure Land Buddhism, Ch'an Buddhism, and Humanistic Buddhism. What follows is a brief discussion of each of these Buddhist movements, and how they relate to the Buddha's Light International Association and the Tzu Chi Foundation.

Pure Land Buddhism

Pure Land Buddhism originated in China in the fifth or sixth century BCE. This form of Buddhism was spread in China by a succession of patriarchs who urged the recitation of Amitabha Buddha's[6] name in order for devotees to gain rebirth in the Pure

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[6] In Buddhism a Buddha is one who has reached enlightenment, while a Bodhisattva has delayed enlightenment in order to help others escape the cycle of rebirth. Consequently, Amitabha is usually seen as a Bodhisattva. In Pure Land Buddhism, however, Amitabha is referred to as a Buddha. Source: Van Hein Study Group, 1997 and Snelling 1987.

Land. In this idyllic environment, no new negative karmic accumulations would be created and all existing ones would evaporate – thus, Nirvana would be merely a short step away (Snelling, 1987: 156). Pure Land shrines allow supplicants to practice individually as well as in a group, with devotees prostrating themselves before icons of important bodhisattvas (Richardson, 1985: 87). During my pilot study I was given a Buddhist text that was distributed by the Guan Yin Temple in Vancouver. The book *Pure Land, Pure Mind*, was compiled in 1997 by the Sutra Translation Committee of the United States and Canada, with the help and cooperation of Buddhist groups like BLIA and the Tzu Chi Foundation. In the book it is explained that the most common form of Pure Land practice is the recitation of Amitabha Buddha's name. The book stresses that such recitation should be done with the utmost faith and a sincere vow to achieve rebirth in the Pure Land (Van Hein Study Group, 1997: iii). Pure Land teachings are based both on the compassion of sentient beings and faith in the compassionate vows of Amitabha Buddha to welcome and guide all sentient beings to his Pure Land.

Pure Land Buddhism is seen by most as an easy method in terms of both goal (rebirth in the Western Pure Land as a stepping-stone toward buddhahood), and form of cultivation (it can be practised anywhere, any time, with no accoutrements or guidance). According to Pure Land texts, it is a "panacea for the diseases of the mind", and it is a democratic method that empowers its adherents, thus freeing them from arcane metaphysics and the dependence on teachers, gurus, roshis, and other mediating authority figures (Van Hein Study Group, 1997: iv). Unlike most forms of Buddhism, Pure Land Buddhism is a religion of faith – faith in both Amitabha Buddha and in one's own capacity to achieve buddhahood. Amitabha Buddha presides over the Pure Land, which is seen as a "paradise in the west" and the land of ultimate bliss (referred to as "Peaceful Nurturing"). In the Pure Land there is none of the suffering, defilement, and delusion that normally blocks people's efforts toward enlightenment while in our world; thus, in the Pure Land individuals will eventually attain complete enlightenment. The essence of Pure Land practice consists of invoking the name of Amitabha, visualizing Amitabha, and taking the vow to be born in the Pure Land (Van Hein Study Group, 1997: 2, Hsing Yun, 2002b: 7).

By vowing to be reborn in the Pure Land, believers shift their focus, and the joys and sorrows of this world become incidental and inconsequential. Through reciting the buddha-name, people focus their attention on Amitabha Buddha and this in turn promotes mindfulness or "buddha-remembrance". According to the Buddha's teachings, all people possess an inherently enlightened true nature that is their real identity. By becoming mindful of the Buddha, people are simply regaining their own real identity and remembering their own "buddha-nature" (Van Hein Study Group, 1997: 3, Hsing Yun, 2000b: 15). Among the Buddha's Light International Association and the Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation, Pure Land Buddhism has been taken to the next level. Rather than merely an escape to some distant realm, members of these organizations see as their goal the establishment of a Pure Land on this earth. While this will be discussed at length in the chapters dedicated to these organizations, I think a brief explanation is called for here.

Tzu Chi's founder, Venerable Master Cheng Yen, has both given talks and written articles on the necessity of bringing a Pure Land to our earth. In one of the chapters that she contributed to the academic text *Buddhist Peacework: Creating Cultures of Peace*, Cheng Yen wrote at great length about a Pure Land on earth, and how this will create peace around the world. Cheng Yen (1999: 179) explains in this article that the notion of a "Pure Land on Earth" is emphasized in the Mahayana tradition of Buddhism. The *Hua-Yen Sutra* (*Avatamska Sutra*) states that the moment you achieve the sincere and earnest intention to attain enlightenment, you have in fact attained enlightenment. Although you have not yet become a perfect and complete Buddha, your mind is finally in harmony with the enlightenment of all Buddhas. The result of this is the ability to see the world as a Pure Land, for "when seen through the Buddha's eye of wisdom and compassion, every place in the world is a Pure Land…peace is created in and with a mind at peace" (Cheng Yen, 1999: 179). A similar concept can be found in the *Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra*, which teaches that in helping others on the path to their enlightenment, you also accomplish your own. Cheng Yen (1999: 180) explains that in the world today there are countless people who need help, and that the people you find in your immediate surroundings (family, friends, colleagues, adversaries) should be regarded as bodhisattvas. It is in this manner that we will gain the ability to create a Pure Land on earth. This Pure Land is created through the Three Practices (the precepts, meditation, and wisdom), which when practiced, will allow your mind and actions to be at peace. Consequently, you will be able to live peacefully with others at all times.

Like Cheng Yen, Hsing Yun (2002a: 26) encourages his followers to promote a living Buddhism. Hsing Yun argues that if we put Buddhism into practice in this world, then we can benefit others with our compassion. The result of this will be the transformation of our world into the Buddha's Light Pure Land. BLIA promotes harmony in the human world, and encourage people to respect and love one another. Hsing Yun (2002a: 54) teaches his followers about the importance of the spirit of oneness and coexistence as he strives to introduce Buddhism to the world. As he explains, while the ultimate goal may be rebirth into the Pure Land, once we purify our own minds the Pure Land will exist at this very moment. In his teachings on Pure Land Buddhism, Hsing Yun expresses the importance of Humanistic Buddhism and how this form of Buddhist tradition will turn our world into the Buddha's Light Pure Land (a concept that will be discussed shortly).

Ch'an Buddhism

Ch'an Buddhism is seen by many Buddhists to be the finest achievement of Chinese Buddhism – an original and highly creative re-expression of the essence of the Buddha's teachings in terms that are distinctly Chinese. This form of Buddhism was later transmitted to Korea (where it became known as *Son*), to Vietnam, to Japan (where it became known as *Zen*), and in recent times to the West (Snelling, 1987: 157). Unlike the more metaphysical forms of Buddhism, Ch'an is about a return to essentials and the basic teachings of the Buddha. While the anti-scriptural, unconventional and sometimes iconoclastic behavior of many Ch'an masters can be mistaken by Westerners for a cue to dispense with the demands of traditional training, Ch'an is in fact intended for those practitioners who are saturated in all aspects of Buddhist teaching and practice (Snelling, 1987: 158). One of the Chinese Buddhist temples that I visited in Vancouver provided me with a book called *Bodhidharma's Teaching*. Bodhidharma was a South Indian Master who was a seminal figure in early Ch'an Buddhism, and entered China around 520. In this book, Venerable Guren Martin (2001: 95)[7] explains that in Ch'an Buddhism there are three essentials of practice: studying with a teacher and questioning the dharma, Ch'an practice, and observing the precepts.

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[7] Venerable Guren Martin is the leader of the Canadian branch of Tung Lin Kok Yuen, a Buddhist

In Ch'an Buddhist temples and monasteries it is traditional to meet and speak with a teacher, in order to both resolve one's doubts and clarify Buddhist scripture. This is a practice that is continued by groups like BLIA, where it is required of members to gather and discuss the Buddha's teachings in dharma study groups. I attended three of these groups, and will discuss the results in chapter five. The second essential Ch'an practice, is comprised of sitting meditation, breathing exercises, and koans (Martin, 2001: 97). While they do not use koans specifically, members of BLIA and the Tzu Chi Foundation practice both sitting mediation and breathing exercises in order to settle and clear their minds. BLIA in fact offers meditation rooms and meditation groups in all of its branch temples. Hsing Yun (1990: 27) has written that in the Ch'an tradition, patriarchs and masters do not practice meditation to become Buddhas, but rather to attain enlightenment. Those who have gained enlightenment are able to "realize liberation, to settle their minds and bodies in the here-and-now of daily life, to live in the moment with carefree self-possession, and to completely illumine their mind and see their True Nature". Rather than simply following Ch'an Buddhism, however, Hsing Yun has combined Ch'an and Pure Land Buddhism together within his teachings in order to create and promote Humanistic Buddhism. Both Hsing Yun and Cheng Yen promote forms of Humanistic Buddhism in a desire to bring compassion to all corners of the world.

Humanistic Buddhism

In 1990, Hsing Yun (1990) gave a keynote speech to the Buddhist Youth Academic Conference at the Fo Guang Shan Temple in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. Hsing Yun's topic was the fundamentals of Humanistic Buddhism, and in his speech he explained that the Humanistic Buddhism that his organization promotes has six characteristics: humanism, and emphasis on daily life, altruism, joyfulness, timeliness, and universality. Hsing Yun argues that regardless of how one classifies Buddhism, it should have a humanistic dimension so that it can remain relevant as times change. Because Humanistic Buddhism attends to the present day and its trends, it is seen by

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association based in Hong Kong.

many as the Buddhism for the future.[8] The Humanistic Buddhism that Hsing Yun (1990: 29) promotes through BLIA can be seen in the objectives that he has devised for his members: to give people faith, joy, hope, and service. The goal that is promoted by members of the organization is to make Buddhism a reality in the world, in our lives, and in our hearts.

Ananda W.P. Guruge is a member of BLIA and the author of the book "Humanistic Buddhism for Social Well-Being: An Overview of Grand Master Hsing Yun's Interpretation in Theory and Practice". According to Guruge (2001: 58), Hsing Yun advocates a comprehensive approach to the doctrinal unity of all traditions of Buddhism as the only adequate foundation for Humanistic Buddhism. Therefore, Hsing Yun stresses that "our basic faith comes from the Buddha himself…his teachings and his life are an example of truth, virtue, wisdom, and perseverance". Hsing Yun's vision is one in which unity and compassion will lead to the spread of Buddhism and peace throughout the world. In an effort to spread Humanistic Buddhism, BLIA promotes respect and tolerance, while also focusing on morality and ethics in order to encourage Buddhist practice in everyday life. Hsing Yun (2001b) believes that it is through such methods that a Pure Land will be created on this world. The humanism that is included in this philosophy is defined by Hsing Yun and his followers as a "moral or intellectual system that regards the interests of mankind as supreme importance, rather than individualism or theism" (Wawrytko, 2001: 6).

In the hopes of using Humanistic Buddhism to bring the Pure Land to this world, Hsing Yun combines Ch'an and Pure Land teachings. Along with Pure Land Buddhism's focus on compassion and the practice of name-recitation, Hsing Yun (2002a: 67) places emphasis on Ch'an mediation practices and Ch'an teachings. Such teachings are used within BLIA to promote the importance of management and education within Humanistic Buddhism. As has been already stated, Hsing Yun promotes the practice of Humanistic Buddhism in every aspect of our daily lives. The Buddha practiced in the human realm, and in doing so he pioneered the means behind the developing social actions involved in Humanistic Buddhism. To members of the Buddha's Light International Association, their job is to bring the Buddha's teachings of compassion and humanism to all sentient beings – thus creating a Pure Land on earth.

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[8] Hsing Yun sees Ch'an, Pure Land, and the Middle Way as joining together to form the basics of Humanistic Buddhism.

A Brief History of Buddhism in Taiwan

Anthropologists studying Taiwan in the early 1970s tended to think that indigenous forms of religion were fading away. Robert P. Weller (2000: 496) has argued that this notion was due in part to a remnant of modernization theory assumptions – assumptions that secularization was inevitable. Such assumptions were supported by crude statistical measures for religion (such as registered temples per capita). The reality, however, was that the Taiwan of the 1990s was experiencing a flourishing of modern democratic and scientific thought, while its traditional folk practices were being renewed and adapted to a modern industrial society. The economic gains that the island has experienced over the last twenty years has led to a boom in the renovating and building of Buddhist and Taoist temples. In addition, new religious groups have arisen that synthesize traditional Chinese and Taiwanese religious ideas with modern concerns. Taiwanese religious culture reflects a unique status as a culture that has been created partially by immigration from Fujian and Guangdong provinces, influences from Japanese and Western presence, and regulations from the Guomindang (the Chinese Nationalist Party) since 1947. The dominant religious activities in Taiwan are ancestral rituals and community temple festivals. Of those who identify themselves as religious, 43% identify themselves as Buddhist (34% identify themselves as Taoist) [Davison & Reed, 1998: 44].

Nevertheless, as Davison and Reed (1998) point out, the visibility of Buddhism appears to assume larger numbers than this percentage would indicate. There are books of popular Buddhist masters on the bestseller lists in Taiwan, and the number of monks, nuns, and temples has risen sharply in the last two decades. Furthermore, large lay organizations (such as BLIA and Tzu Chi) have founded new schools and hospitals, and their groups on college campuses have become more visible and active. The growing importance and influence of these Buddhist leaders based in Taiwan has extended beyond the island to those members living in North America and elsewhere. Perhaps more importantly (at least to these groups), their followers are not limited to those from Taiwan

– or even to those from Asia in general.

In terms of practice, Pure Land Buddhism dominates in Taiwan today (Seaman, 1981, Davison & Reed, 1998, Jones, 1999). Throughout the island one can find devotees wearing small 'rosaries' (*nianzhu)* as a visible symbol that they have formally taken refuge in Buddhism at a temple under a Pure Land master. Such devotees also use the name of Amitabha Buddha as a substitute for 'hello', 'goodbye', 'excuse me', and most other social expressions. Even temples that on the surface profess an emphasis on Ch'an meditation practice seem to have a large number of participants who are drawn by Buddha-recitation events (Jones, 1999: 115). According to Jones (1999), between the years of 1941 and 1960, Taiwan constructed more temples enshrining Amitabha Buddha than any other buddha, bodhisattva, or deity. Much of this modern Pure Land thought and practice in fact stems from the revival of Pure Land teachings that took place in the Lingyan Temple in Suzhou under the leadership of Venerable Yinguang (1861-1940) [which his direct disciple, Li Bingnang, subsequently transmitted into Taiwan].

As Jones (1999: 118) explains, Yinguang conceptualized Pure Land as a concrete goal, and not as a purified state of mind as it was commonly held on the mainland. For several centuries in China Pure Land had been separated into two schools of thought. The first form of Pure Land practice was 'Mind-Only Pure Land' (*Weixin jingtu*), which held that the Pure Land only appears when an individual's mind has been purified. The more popular form of Pure Land was 'Western Pure Land' (*Xifang jingtu*), in which the Western Paradise of Amitabha Buddha was a real, concrete destination. The goal of this type of Pure Land was to attain rebirth into this Western Paradise. Yinguang fell into this last group of Pure Land Buddhists, but like most, never lost his faith in the importance of both morality and keeping the Buddhist precepts pure. The life and thought of Yinguang constitutes the framework of modern Pure Land belief in Taiwan, and it continues to influence the Humanistic Buddhism of groups like the Buddha's Light International Association and the Tzu Chi Foundation.

When the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China reformed and revived the ordination system in Taiwan, its efforts produced one consequence that could not have been foreseen. Since the first ordination on the island in 1952, nuns have rapidly come to predominate in number over monks. This is a consequence that is extremely important to Taiwanese Buddhism because of its uniqueness. The predominance of nuns over monks is a situation that exists only in Taiwan and Hong Kong, and in those Buddhist groups that originated in Taiwan before spreading globally. In Taiwan, the ordination ratio has frequently been 3:1 or higher, and in Canada both BLIA and the Tzu Chi Foundation are dominated by nuns. In Taiwan, the most common reason given for this ratio is the fact that women are more religiously inclined then men (in my own research, I was often told that women have better hearts for the compassion and patience that is needed in Buddhism). On both the island and in Canada today (as in the recent past) most dharma meetings, Buddha-recitation sessions, religious services, and so on, are attended by many more women then men.

Jones (1999) points out that this uneven ratio of women to men could also be due to population pressures in Taiwan, which have severely reduced the average family size over the last few decades. If couples are restricting themselves to only one or two children, then they may only have one son to produce heirs and carry on the cult of the family ancestors. This extra pressure may discourage men from seeking ordination. Jones also asserts that the relaxing of traditional Chinese family values (especially in urban areas) has made it easier for daughters to seek ordination despite parental objections. In rural areas, on the other hand, women may still choose ordination as an escape from marriage and children and as an opportunity to pursue an education and meaningful career (Jones, 1999: 154). Gary Seaman (1981) has argued that since descent in Taiwan is based almost exclusively on the male line, women's rights and the manner in which women are incorporated into their husband's lines are complex and often threatening to male solidarity. As a consequence, a rationalizing ideology has been formed over time in which women are subordinate to men, the result of which is the importance of women's roles as the producers of children and the caretaker of the home. As a consequence, the success of organizations such as the Tzu Chi Foundation, which does not threaten this traditional ideology but instead incorporates it, is measured in the significant female membership in Taiwan and around the world.

In the areas of Taipei and Sanhsia, most – if not all – Taiwanese consider nuns to be at least as respectable as monks, and in some cases even more so. Because a woman seeking ordination is often scrutinized more carefully than a man, and made to undergo a trial period of two or three years before receiving the novice's tonsure, she is often given more respect after the fact (Jones, 1999: 154).[9] Since men are often scarcer, a man may be accepted more readily then a woman, and could be tonsured after a matter of months rather than years. Therefore, since nuns pass a longer and more intense period of vocational testing they are often considered to be of a higher average quality then the monks on the island. Incidentally, this inequality is not present within BLIA, where standardization is seen as extremely important to running a Buddhist organization in a 'correct' manner. The ordination of both men and women is treated as a serious matter, and the process is both long and arduous. Similarly, within the Tzu Chi Foundation, nuns are treated with a great deal of respect, but they do not receive ordination in a manner different from their male counterparts.

The increased prominence of female clergy in social activism, education, and temple management, as well as among the laity, has certainly drawn more attention to groups like the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation. And, while the quality and numbers of nuns have been increasing over the years, little attention has been given to the fact that just the opposite has been effecting the ordination of monks. As Jones (1999: 155) indicates, the numbers of male clergy as a percentage of the overall population in Taiwan has fallen dramatically since 1953. Moreover, there has also been a growing concern on the island as to the commitment of monks to their vocation and to their overall quality. While these explanations and descriptions offer no tested reasoning behind the remarkable increase in the population of nuns (something Jones readily admits to), they do give a sense of how the citizens of Taiwan and the members of these Buddhist organizations understand this unique phenomenon.

While Taiwan certainly is not immune to religious fundamentalism, religious pluralism is more characteristic of its society. Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Taoism, and a variety of folk traditions coexist peacefully (more often than not) in general society. In fact, much like on the mainland, family members may simultaneously subscribe to several compatible – or even incompatible – belief systems (Tu Wei-ming, 1998: 93). This approach has enabled Taiwanese society to develop a richly textured religious landscape. Nevertheless, while the momentum of the Christian evangelical movement has remained relatively unchanged in Taiwan since the 1970s (Christian converts equal about three percent of the population), Buddhist sects have increased steadily in government, business, and college campuses since the middle of the twentieth century (Tu Weiming, 1998: 93). Venerable Hsing Yun's Fo Guang Shan is probably the best known and thoroughly internationalized group that is based out of Taiwan, and along with the Tzu Chi Foundation it is representative of the this-worldly orientated, humanistic Buddhism that is popular on the island today.

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[9] This is not to say that Buddhist nuns are accepted everywhere in Taiwan. In some areas nuns are viewed with a great deal of suspicion, and are seen as social misfits (Jones, 1999).

Growth in indigenous forms of religion began again in Taiwan in the early 1970s, and it has generally continued unabated – although individual movements have ebbed and flowed over the years. This growth in indigenous religions coincides roughly with the period when Taiwan moved firmly into an export-orientated policy with minimum state support of society (beyond education and infrastructure) [Weller, 1985: 52]. As Taiwan has thrived in the new capitalist world, it's religions have also become more localizing and more universalizing. As Weller concludes, Taiwan has recently become the general liberal economic model that is prescribed for the entire world – one that has pushed market competition and charitable redistribution, and one that has celebrated individualism and constructed social values. Taiwan is "both postmodern and modern, together and inseparable" (Weller, 2000: 494). According to Weller, part of the answer to the particularities of Taiwan's current religious vigor lies in its long history of involvement in global trade, market economics, and borderland politics. The new ease of movement that has been made available through media and transportation has allowed both people and temples to act on larger scales then they ever could before (Weller, 2000: 496).

Buddhism in the West: A Historical Framework

In his book *The Buddhist Handbook*, John Snelling (1987: 225) rightly points out that in the nineteenth century established religion (that is, the conventional brand of church Christianity) began to lose its grip over the hearts and minds of ordinary people. This process created a spiritual vacuum of sorts, and all types of phenomena rushed in to fill the space. One of the consequences of this vacuum was a turn in the West towards both Buddhism and various other religions of the East. The interest in Buddhism, which first flowered in the nineteenth century, has come to full growth in our own day. Theravada Buddhism in particular, which so appealed to the rationalist and humanist tendencies of the nineteenth century on both sides of the Atlantic, has continued to offer both a spiritual path and an intellectual stimulus to many who firmly rejected the transcendental aspects of the Christian teachings (Clarke, 1997, Strong, 2002).

One of the first ideologies that rushed in to fill the vacuum left by Christianity - and one that is important to the discussion of Buddhism in the West - is the Theosophical Movement. The founders of the Theosophical Society, Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891) and her American colleague, Colonel Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1906) in fact declared themselves Buddhists, and confirmed it by "taking *Pansil*" (reciting the Five Precepts) at Galle in Sri Lanka in 1880 (Godwin, 1994, Robinson & Johnson, 1997). Blavatsky and Olcott claimed that the known religions of the world merely propagated a superficial spiritual message for mass consumption, and it was behind this that there lay hidden an esoteric dimension that was strictly reserved for the initiated (Godwin, 1994: 295). This dimension was itself derived from an "ancient wisdom-religion", one which preceded and gave birth to all the known religions. According to Blavatsky and her followers, Theosophy was the modern exposition for this ancient religion (Snelling, 1987: 226).

The cult also contained admixtures of occultism and other exotic ingredients, and its charismatic leaders regularly commuted to the occult plane to receive guidance from *Mahatmas,* or Masters of Wisdom. Blavatsky and Olcott particularly favored Buddhism because they considered it to be the noblest and least defiled remnant of the great Ancient Wisdom-Religion, hence their gesture at Galle in 1880 (Godwin, 1994, Robinson & Johnson, 1997). Today, Theosophists often come in for wry critical comment in Buddhist circles, and this is certainly understandable. Western Buddhists have with great difficulty disentangled themselves from the subtle (and not so subtle) distortions that Madame Blavatsky and her colleagues projected upon the Buddha's teachings (Snelling, 1987: 227).

What the Theosophists should be given their due credit for, however, is their efforts in preparing the way for Westerners to go deeper into the study of Buddhism, and thus to eventually begin to practice the teachings. The first Westerner to accomplish the important step of donning the yellow robe of the monk, was Allan Bennett (1872-1923) (Batchelor, 1994: 40). Bennett was known as a peculiar man whose enthusiasm for Buddhism was awakened by reading *The Light of Asia*.[10] In 1902, Bennett was ordained as a Bhikkhu (a fully ordained monk) and he subsequently took the name Ananda Maitreya (Ananda Metteyya in Pali). Ananda Metteyya was determined to lead a Buddhist mission to Europe, and he thus set up both an international organization in Rangoon, as well as the Buddhist Society of Great Britain and Ireland, in 1907. Unfortunately, Ananda Metteyya was plagued by ill health and by 1914 he was forced to disrobe and return to his home in England (Batchelor, 1994: 41).

In 1904, a Scotsman named J.F. McKechni (1871-1951) picked up a copy of Ananda Metteyya's journal *Buddhism*, and it announced that it had changed his life. McKechni sailed out to Rangoon, and he was later ordained into the sangha as Bhikkhu Silacara (Batchelor, 1994: 308). The first non-British Westerner to enter the sangha was a German virtuoso musician named Anton Gueth (1878-1957), who was ordained as Nyanatiloka Bhikkhu in 1903. Interest in Buddhism was gaining rapidly in Germany, and in the early twentieth century Dr. Paul Dahlke built the first Buddhist *vihara* in Western Europe, closely following the monastic Vinaya (Batchelor, 1994: 314).[11] Not long after this temple was built, George Grimm (1864-1945) founded the "Old Buddhist Community" at Utting in Bavaria. This organization is still in existence today, and since it dates its year of inception as 1923, it claims to be the oldest Buddhist organization in Europe (Snelling, 1987: 228). It is obvious that Britain, with its close colonial connections with the Asian Buddhist countries, had the ability to generate the most Buddhist activity before World War II. After the first Buddhist society had been formed, other local groups began to spring up, magazines were published, and lectures were vigorously delivered by enthusiastic speakers (Snelling, 1987: 229).

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[10] *The Light of Asia* is an epic poem that was published by the journalist, Sir Edwin Arnold in 1879. It was proclaimed the "best seller" of all Buddhist books in the West, and it helped a wider lay public to appreciate that the Buddha's teachings contained spiritual ideas of great depth and beauty. See Snelling (1987) or Batchelor (1994) for more information.

[11] A vihara is a temple in the Sri Lankan Theravada tradition.

The founding of Buddhist societies in both Germany and England was important in aiding the propagation of Buddhist ideas and practices throughout the West. Moreover, the range of Eastern ideas and philosophies with which the West has sought to engage has been widened to a large extent in the twentieth century (and since). Most conspicuous in this process is the emergence into Western consciousness of the northern schools of Mahayana Buddhism, which until the late nineteenth century were usually dismissed as degenerate and corrupt forms of the "original Buddhism" (Clarke, 1997: 98). Nevertheless, up until World War II, and for some time afterwards, Buddhism remained a largely middle-class area of interest. However, according to many Buddhist scholars, this trend was rapidly changing, and no more so than during the 1960s when a new generation came of age (Snelling, 1987, Robinson & Johnson, 1997, Strong 2002). When Western religions did not provide the answers these young people were looking for, there was a mass turning towards the philosophies of the East. According to Joseph M. Kitagawa (1987: 311), in the 1960's there was a widespread impression among Buddhists in Asia that the West was "spiritually bankrupt" and in need of the "Gospel of Buddha", thus members were encouraged to travel to the West as missionaries.

It was during this period that Zen Buddhism (one of the Mahayana schools) had the most powerful impact on the West. Zen first appeared in the West before World War I, but it was the inter-war period and after that the writings of D.J. Suzuki helped to awaken the Western mind to the "strange and enticing" world of Zen (Clarke, 1997: 98). Following the defeat of Japan in 1945 and the lowering of cultural barriers between that country and the West, Suzuki's writings reached a wide audience and elicited warm acclaim throughout Europe and North America. During the post-war period, and especially during the era of cultural efflorescence that is associated with the beat and hippie movements, there emerged in the West a desire for cultural liberation and spiritual fulfillment. This spiritual liberation was something that was felt by many to be left unsatisfied by the established, Western traditions (Clarke, 1997: 98). It should not be surprising then, that Buddhism, with its aesthetic purism and its promise for enlightenment, has been continuously cultivated in the West.

Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) is certainly one of the oldest institutional forms of Buddhism in North America. According to the Buddhist scholar Richard

Hughes Seager (1999), the hymn singing and sermons that are offered by this group resemble those of American Protestantism. Perhaps the best evidence of this is the assimilation of the BCA into mainstream American society. Nevertheless, after more than a century in North America, the Japanese (who compose the bulk of BCA membership) have wrestled in many ways with the westernization issues that are faced by ethnic minorities. Thus, even the most casual observer will still note substantial differences between the BCA temple and the Protestant church – the most conspicuous of which is the altar with its centrally located image of the Buddha (Seager, 1999: 3).

From the early days of the Buddhist movement there was talk of the development of a distinctly Western form of Buddhism. As Snelling (1987: 266) rightly points out, these arguments are now classics among Buddhist literature. Nevertheless, the core of Buddhism is universal, so while there have been differences inherited from the cultures in which Buddhism has developed, these differences have not prevented the tradition from being assimilated into modern Western contexts. More than half a century ago, Captain J.E. Ellam, the Honorable Secretary of the original Buddhist Society of Great Britain and Ireland, coined the term *Navayana* (New *Yana* or vehicle). Ellam later wrote a book on the subject of reconciling Buddhism and the cultural traditions of the West. Later, in 1951, the Western Buddhist Order was established in the United States by Venerable Sumangalo (Robert Clifton). This was an "organization dedicated to interpreting the Dharma to the West and establishing groups where none existed" (Snelling, 1987: 266). More recently, we have also seen the emergence in Britain of a Scientific Buddhist Association, and a movement calling itself the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO).

The brand of "Western Buddhism" that is propagated by these groups is often one that disfavors the monastic orientation of traditional Eastern Buddhism, but yet recognizes the advantages to be delivered from close association with spiritual friends within the matrix of a community. The term *sangha* thus has a special use within the FWBO: it does not merely denote the monastic segment of the Buddhist community, but it in fact refers to the whole community. Those who live and work together within the Order are encouraged to develop "positive and direct communication" with each other, and to generally strive to coexist in an "ethical, harmonious, and altruistic way"

(Snelling, 1987: 267). Consequently, it is clear from these examples that Buddhist converts in the West are taking a great deal of care in the development of their tradition and their communities.

Nevertheless, while this is indeed true, Seager (1999) and Strong (2002) have documented that as many as three-quarters of Western Buddhists are in new immigrant communities. These are individuals whose contributions to the long-term development of Buddhist teachings remains particularly difficult to assess, and these contributions are often overlooked or underrated. The Western Buddhist community as a whole encompasses an extremely wide spectrum of opinions about the nature and practice of Buddhism. Regardless of this fact (and perhaps because of it) there are few pressures on Buddhists to foster unity. Instead, many communities are more or less out of communication with one another. BLIA is one of only a handful of Buddhist organizations in the West that attempt any contact with other Buddhist groups. As a result, the most prominent feature of Western Buddhism for the last thirty years has been the gulf between immigrants and converts – a gulf that is created by a range of deep cultural, linguistic, and social differences. A less obvious dimension of this gulf is one that is perhaps more strictly religious, and one where the contrast between tradition and innovation often appears with particularly high relief.

The Buddhism of the immigrant population within North America tends to remain informed by the rich cosmological world-views of Buddhist Asia. For many converts, on the other hand, the teachings are becoming integrated with a more secular outlook on life. For instance, among Chinese Buddhists, bodhisattvas are viewed as dynamic, personalized forces and cosmic entities. Yet for many Western Buddhists, cosmic bodhisattvas tend to be regarded as merely metaphors (Seager, 1999: 234). Most Buddhist immigrant groups now have well-established networks of temples and other institutions, and have thus begun the process of retaining, adjusting, and abandoning elements of their received tradition as part of the adaptation to North America. Moreover, a second, and in many cases third generation is on the rise, whose attitude toward tradition will largely determine the shape of immigrant Buddhism in the twenty-first century.

The History of Chinese Buddhism in North America

Buddhism has been practised by Chinese in the West since the middle of the nineteenth century, when immigrants from the mainland first arrived in California (drawn by the Gold Rush of 1848) [Richardson, 1985: 87]. Although the Imperial Chinese government had discouraged emigration, officials in Guangdong province ignored this ban, and thousands set out for North America in search of employment. The first Chinatown was formed in Victoria by these immigrants, many of whom had engaged in earlier gold-mining activities in Canada. In the first half of the 1880s, the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway brought almost 17,000 Chinese into Western Canada – although a large portion of the railroad workers followed in the footsteps of the gold-miners before them and eventually returned home to China. Regardless of this fact, the Chinese population in the province of British Columbia alone increased from four thousand in 1880 to more than ten thousand by 1884 (Ng, 1999: 10). Moreover, between 1911 and 1923, the Chinese presence in Canada almost doubled due to the high level of immigration in 1911 and after World War I. More importantly to the long-term development of this population, was the improvement in the sex ratio, along with the increasing number of immigrants and local-born children. After a quarter of a century of settlement in Canada, the Chinese minority had finally (and gradually) proceeded to the stage of family formation and the raising of a second generation (Ng, 1999: 14).

These immigrants from China brought with them both ancient and modern religious traditions, among which Buddhism was only one. Taoism was also delivered to the West, along with its elements of magic, its patterns of meditation, and its mysticism. Many Chinese practiced both Buddhism and Taoism simultaneously. As I have already stated, temples that included elements of both religions were popular in China, and in some cases they were also built in the United States. Even today, most of the Chinatown temples that are found in North America are identified with popular folk religions, rather than with either Buddhism or Taoism. Then again, there are also many temples which are primarily Buddhist, and some which are primarily Taoist. The membership in the syncretic religious organizations is almost entirely Chinese, and many of these members are elderly immigrants who do not speak English (Layman, 1976: 151). The possible result of this is the gradual decline in syncretic temples in North America. In contrast, since 1950 there has been a slow but steady growth in the non-syncretic forms of Chinese Buddhism in the West. These groups have attracted a number of Western converts, and there has been particular interest paid to Ch'an Buddhism and the T'ien-t'ai meditation groups (Layman, 1976: 151). Interest in these groups is steadily increasing, and may soon rival the Japanese Zen groups that were so popular among non-Asians in the middle of the twentieth century.

The first social organizations formed by the Chinese as they immigrated to North America were based on kinship and linguistic groups, as well as on mutual aid. Reflecting the rise of the Chinese population in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was the desire for organized mutual aid groups. In the absence of regularized diplomatic ties between the United States and China's Manchu government, these voluntary associations became influential, particularly when anti-Chinese violence flared up on the West Coast in the post-Civil War decades (Robinson & Johnson, 1997, Seager, 1999).[12] For much of North American Chinese history these merchant groups were the primary sponsors of the community's religious life. Groups such as these in fact sponsored the first Buddhist temples in San Francisco, one of which was founded by the Sze Yap Company in 1853. A rival company founded the second temple just a year later. Each of these temples was housed on the top floor of the company's headquarters, a pattern that can still be observed in older Chinatown temples today (Seager, 1999: 159).

By 1875, there were eight temples in San Francisco, and by one generous estimate there were more than seven hundred Chinese temples across the United States and Canada (many of which were small shacks or home temples) at the end of the nineteenth century. According to Seager (1999: 159), only a few of these original temples are still in existence. The religion practiced in these temples was a complex mixture of Confucianism, ancestor worship, popular Taoism, and Pure Land Buddhism, and this indeed exemplifies Chinese popular religion. It is thanks to this complicated belief system that devotion to Amitabha, Guan Yin, and other bodhisattvas was introduced into North America by the Chinese pioneers. Despite this early introduction, however, most of the Chinese Buddhism that exists in North America today is of much more recent origin. Chinese immigration was drastically curtailed in the late nineteenth century, and as a result the estimates of the population in the twentieth century have run as low as 150,000 in 1950. Nevertheless, changes in the immigration laws in the 1950s and 1960s encouraged a dramatic increase in Chinese immigration, and by the mid-1990s there were well over three-quarters of a million ethnic Chinese immigrants in the United States alone (Seager, 1999: 159). When, by the early 1940s, the number of Chinese had plummeted in Canada, and the dwindling minority consisted of adult immigrants in their thirties or older, there were still signs of vitality in the activity of Chinese Buddhist organizations (Ng, 1999: 16). Perhaps the difficulties that the Chinese population experienced in Canada during these years encouraged them to intensify their collective endeavors as they were left to fend for themselves.

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[12] These early voluntary associations later consolidated into merchant organizations called the *Sic* (or Seven) Companies.

In the eyes of the immigrants, the children who had come to Canada (and their local-born counterparts) were in drastic need of education in Chinese traditions because of their obvious vulnerability to deculturation. Among ethnic Chinese, there was indeed a sense of 'Chineseness' that was intertwined with a pervasive feeling of community in their new country. For that generation of immigrant settlers, along with their local-born descendants, their community could be readily identified within their fairly compact ethnic neighborhood in which most of them worked and resided (Ng, 1999: 18). With the increase of young newcomers after 1960, however, there were conflicts regarding the old definitions of identity and community, and the perceived cultural conservatism of the older generation. The ideas about contemporary Chinese culture were often very different when seen through the eyes of these newcomers.

Many of these immigrants arrived in Canada as Christians, and some were no doubt non-religious, but there were also many who arrived as Buddhists. There is no question that these individuals added considerably to the complex cultural profile of Buddhism in the West. Wing Chung Ng (1999: 20) in fact estimates that by the 1990s there were almost one hundred Chinese Buddhist organizations in Canada. Some of these were very small, while others were extensive, and almost all shared the tendency of Chinese Buddhism toward doctrinal and ritual eclecticism. A form of practice that is significant to many of these groups is *nien-fo*, or the devotional recitation of the names and attributes of the buddhas and bodhisattvas (especially that of Amitabha Buddha). Furthermore, in many of these organizations, the taking of bodhisattva vows and the cultivation of compassion are of central importance. This encourages altruistic social action that can include charity and disaster relief work, maintaining a vegetarian diet, and practicing the ritual release of captive animals (Robinson & Johnson, 1997, Seager, 1999). Aside from these general characteristics, it is clear from the available data that Chinese Buddhism in the West is highly diverse.

Chinese Buddhist Practice and Organizations

The Chinese were actually the first Buddhists to reach North America, but it was not until Tripitaka Master Hsuan Hua began teaching the five schools of Ch'an, T'ien-t'ai, Vijrayana, Esoteric, and Pure Land, in San Francisco's Chinatown in 1962, that the full range of Chinese Buddhism came into view in the West (Fields, 1981: 339). Hsuan Hua was born in northeast China in 1908. In 1949, Hsuan Hua fled the Communist revolution and emigrated first to Hong Kong and then ten years later, to Australia and the United States. When he reached the United States he was welcomed by a group of his disciples, who had already founded the San Francisco Buddhist Lecture Hall in 1958 (Fields, 1981: 339). Hsuan Hua was first known only in the Chinese community of San Francisco, but gradually word spread that an enlightened Ch'an master was living in Chinatown, and American converts began to come around as well.

Hsuan Hua was then living and teaching in the small fourth floor room of the Buddhist Lecture Hall, and it was there, in the summer of 1968, that he held his first ninety-six day Dharma Assembly on the *Shurangama Sutra*. At the end of the session the Master said "this year the Dharma flower will bloom in America – a five petalled flower" (Fields, 1981: 341). The following year, five of Hsuan Hua's students accompanied him to Keelung, Taiwan, where they received the sharamanera (novice), bhikku, and bodhisattva ordinations. When they returned to the United States, their shaved heads were marked with the five incense burns that are customary for ordination. In 1970, Hsuan Hua and the Sino-American Buddhist Association (which replaced the original Buddhist Lecture Hall) built the Gold Mountain Monastery. The name "Gold Mountain" was not only the name of a monastery in China, but it was also the name that the first

Chinese immigrants had given California during the Gold Rush. It was at this Monastery, on June 7, 1972 that Hsuan Hua and five American bhikkus conducted the first ordination ceremony on North American soil. This was an important moment in the history of Buddhism in the West.

Master Hsing Yun (2001d: 107) writes about this moment in one of his books, *Where There is Dharma There is a Way*, and discusses the necessity of ordaining monks and nuns from within the United States and Canada. To Hsing Yun, the only way to effectively bring Buddhism to the West (and keep it here) is to ordain converts from local communities. Fields (1981: 342) in fact points out that in the *Mahavamsa* (the Great Chronicles of Ceylon, a Buddhist text), King Mahanama says that Buddhism can not truly be said to have taken root in a country until a native-born son is ordained in his native land by his countrymen. In 1972 that condition was met by Master Hsuan Hua, and even today it is a goal that is seen as vital to the globalization of Buddhism by organizations like the Buddha's Light International Association. Both BLIA and the Tzu Chi Foundation make an effort to recruit members from within the local communities.

Understanding Buddhist Evolution in the West

In an effort to westernize the Buddha's teachings, a few converts have advocated divorcing meditation from the other rituals that play an important part in Buddhism in the East. These rituals are viewed by many as unnecessary elements of an Asian culture. However, in spite of this, many others would prefer to maintain and adapt these features of Buddhism to a uniquely Western setting. The example of this that is provided by Seager (1999), depicts a small group of people (both Asian immigrants and Anglo converts) in a monastery in California, who can be found most mornings recreating a ritual whose origins date from the earliest days of Buddhism. Just after sunrise, they busy themselves in a small informal kitchen preparing breakfast for the monks of the monastery. After the meal, the lay people and monks usually gather together for chanting, or to engage in consultations (after which the laity will consume the remainder of the meal).

This type of activity can be observed in numerous Buddhist temples in most major American and Canadian cities. Such rituals play a particularly important role among the Asian immigrant communities in the West, who are re-creating their received religious traditions in a new setting. Ritual acts such as making prostrations and taking refuge are important components of the religious life of many Western Buddhists. Nevertheless, there are also new rituals that are only now taking form in the West as a result of religious experimentation. Some Buddhists are beginning to mix elements of practice that are drawn from a variety of Asian traditions, many of which can now be found in North America. As Seager (1999: 8) contends, all of these rituals provide the observer with glimpses into the landscape of Western Buddhism, which by Western standards is an exotic terrain of unfamiliar religious convictions and foreign practices.

The bows and prostrations that are involved in such groups are meaningful reminders that while these religious groups may exist in the West, they are not typical Western religions. The bow, for instance, is listed in the *Tzu Chi Glossary* as a greeting that praises the merits of another person. The prostration, on the other hand, is seen as the highest expression of respect in Buddhism (anon., 1997a: 48). When you cannot make a prostration, you can make three bows with folded hands (such as when you enter the main hall of a Buddhist temple – something I have watched people do time and time again). But the correct method is actually one bow, three prostrations, and then one more bow (something I have watched very few people do). To prostrate, you lower your head to touch the ground and turn your palms upward – the point is to imagine that when you face the Buddha, your head touches his feet and you are offering yourself to him. Turning your palms upward means that you are accepting the blessings and wisdom that have been offered by the Buddha. The kneeling pad that is placed in the center of the hall (as it was in the True Buddha School, the Guan Yin Temple, Tung Lin Kok Yuen, and BLIA), should not be touched by anyone except the abbot or abbess. When two people make the prostration at the same time, they must do it together – and when there are more than two people, one person must call out the movements for the other members (anon., 1997a: 48).

While it is certainly true that Chinese Buddhism is impacting the West, and that Westerners are impacting Chinese Buddhism, there are still some Chinese Buddhist temples in the United States and Canada that shun all contacts with the West and its association with secularism. These temples are carefully preserved as a microcosm of

Chinese culture, and for the children growing up in these communities the temple often represents ties with a culture that they have experienced only through their parents (Richardson, 1985: 92). Moreover, despite ties to their homelands through the Buddhist sangha, most Buddhist immigrants in North America have experienced difficulty in maintaining the way of life that they have inherited. Children often drift away from the tradition, and in many cases they see conversion to Christianity a worthwhile means of fitting in with their new friends and adapting to Western culture. A few of the young people I spoke to at the Edmonton chapter of BLIA told me they wanted to be Christian because many of their friends were. Their parents encouraged them come to the Buddhist temple (and the Sunday Schools or youth groups), but they had yearnings to be elsewhere – not simply because of religious preference, but instead because of a need to fit in.

It is precisely because of their concern about influences from the West that Buddhist leaders have put an increased emphasis on education in recent years, thus adopting the use of weekend conferences, forums, and seminars (as well as the use of audio-visual resources). In order to offset a perceived decline in members of the traditional Buddhist community, these education forums offer devotees deeper and more academic discussions of important elements of their religious tradition. While the goals of the Buddha's Light International Association are not the same as these traditional Buddhist groups (to keep the Chinese 'Chinese'), they do use similar resources in order to educate their followers about the Buddha's teachings. In fact, the Tzu Chi Foundation has established the Tzu Chi Academy in Richmond in 1997, Coquitlam (2000), and Vancouver, British Columbia (2001). The Academy offers students of all ages a curriculum that is focused on Chinese culture, language, and moral values, as well as the teachings of Master Cheng Yen. Lessons are taught through quotes and sayings that are easily understood by children. The program has received wide support from both parents and children, and there are now more than one thousand students in the Academy (the majority of which are Chinese, yet there is a growing list of Caucasian students) [anon., 2002: 11].

In some instances, concern for maintenance of the Buddhist tradition has led to innovations like the construction of monasteries and retreat houses. By offering their devotees a place of worship and relaxation away from traditional Chinatowns, Chinese community leaders are better able to control the environment in which their tradition is practiced. Once inside these compounds, traces of the Western world quickly vanish. In these instances, any intrusion of people outside of the Buddhist tradition is openly discouraged (Richardson, 1985: 97). The Guan Yin Temple in Vancouver[13] is an example of such large Chinese-style monasteries, although their goals do not include excluding Westerners. The Temple grounds are so large that any reminder of Western culture is effectively dismissed, and many visitors spend the afternoon enjoying the tranquil atmosphere of the lake and garden. While Edmonton does not have such a unique monastery, many major cities in North America do (Los Angeles, San Francisco, Vancouver, Toronto, to name a few), and these monasteries are important sanctuaries even today. Buddhist immigrants in North America have a unique world-view in which the cultural ideals of detachment and enlightenment are transmitted from one generation to the next. Consequently there is often a struggle to retain a sense of belonging and purpose in a landscape where these cultural ideals have been frequently misunderstood by outsiders. Nevertheless, organizations like BLIA and the Tzu Chi Foundation have made important strides in adapting their traditions to suit the needs not only of Chinese immigrant communities in North America, but also local-born Chinese and their Western counterparts. By combining traditional Buddhist practices of meditation, retreats, and refuge with new forms of Engaged Buddhism, these particular organizations have found new members by organizing in support of social justice, gender equity, environmental awareness, world peace, and other such causes.

According to Robinson and Johnson (1997: 217) "one of China's most distinctive contributions to Buddhism has been its tradition of Buddhist charitable organization", the most notable example of which is the Tzu Chi Foundation. While in the past in Taiwan Buddhism was treated as largely irrelevant to the needs of the times, over the last twenty years the island has experienced a surge in Buddhist revival. The growth of the economy has provided a surplus of funds that has been devoted to a number of religious projects, and as we have seen Buddhism has become a solution to Taiwan's the sense of alienation that has grown from its increasingly materialistic society. It is evident that Buddhism has become particularly attractive to women in Taiwan, who according to Robinson and Johnson (1997: 217) have been "swelling the ranks of the Sangha to an unprecedented degree". Groups like the Buddha's Light International Association and the Tzu Chi Foundation also attract lay women on the island who see Buddhism as a spiritual refuge, thus enthusiastically devoting their time and services (and income) to its advancement. As a consequence, the state of Buddhism in Taiwan today is one of advancement and growth as more and more individuals flock towards organizations based on social awareness, often as a means of offsetting their sudden financial gain and the responsibility that comes with it.

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[13] I spent time at this temple during both my pilot study and my fieldwork, the details of which will be discussed in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

The aim in the pre-fieldwork phase and the early stages of data collection is to turn preliminary problems into a set of questions to which an answer can be given. Often in this early process, the original problems are transformed, or even completely abandoned, in favor of more suitable questions. In addition to avoiding basing conclusions on faulty assumptions, another concern that must be treated mindfully when beginning anthropological fieldwork is the choice of setting. While there are times when the setting itself is chosen first (perhaps on the basis of preliminary questions), the nature of the setting still plays an important role in the shaping of the research questions. It is certainly rare in ethnography that all research questions are decided before the fieldwork actually begins, and the collection of primary data often plays a significant role in the process of developing questions. In addition, there is the complication that a case study may not be contained within the boundaries of a particular setting. For instance, both the Buddha's Light International Association (BLIA) and the Tzu Chi Foundation have chapters in numerous cities and towns around the world. However, I chose as my particular setting the cities of Edmonton and Vancouver. This was based on Vancouver's deep Chinese immigrant history, and Edmonton's contrary experience of gradual immigrant influx. Consequently, while I could not travel to all of the locations that are impacted by these religious organizations, the choice of these settings provided my research with the necessary reflection of this diversity.

Pilot Study

The main focus for my pilot study was the True Buddha School, which is a Chinese Buddhist organization that has temples throughout Canada and the United States. The temple that I visited was situated in the heart of Edmonton's Chinatown, but has since been expanded with the construction of a large Chinese-style temple on Edmonton's north side. I visited this temple ten times over the course of four months (from January to April, 2001), during which I was able to participate in both the Chinese New Year and a variety of temple ceremonies and meditation groups. This particular group follows Vajrayana Buddhism, which uses meditation, chanting, and visualization in order to engage the body, speech, and mind to reach enlightenment (this information was gained through casual discussion while at the temple). The Edmonton chapter of this Buddhist sect has over one hundred members, almost all of whom are Chinese. It was because of this, and the fact that all services, books, magazines, and cassettes were offered in Mandarin and Cantonese only, that led me to suspect that ethnic solidarity played an important factor for this Buddhist group. Based on this study, I concluded wrongly that Chinese Buddhist organizations in the West reinforced ethnic solidarity on the one hand, while gradually losing ground to the westernization of younger generations of locally- born Chinese on the other. While Chinese Buddhism does play an important role in the process of creating and maintaining ethnic solidarity, instead of losing its members to modernization the religion is being adapted and modernized by its temple leaders and organizers.

Sample and Data Collection

Because of its ability to travel and adapt, Buddhism has become a dominant world religion in the twentieth and twenty-first century. However, even with its long history and rich traditions, Buddhism (in all its aspects and varieties) is not merely a religion of 'faith', but is instead one that insists on addressing modern world issues. Among groups like BLIA, this means providing the community with numerous classes, books, videos, and so on. Thus, it was vital to my research to examine the specific motivations behind these temple activities. Are these facilities offered as a method of recruitment, of spreading Buddhism, or of maintaining group solidarity among a transnational community? Are these methods successful in Western Canada? It is questions like these that I addressed through prolonged study of primary sources, participation in Buddhist events and study groups, and interviews of members in the Chinese immigrant Buddhist community in Canada, along with those few Western converts involved in the process.

Like most anthropologists, I chose to base my fieldwork on both structured and unstructured interviews. There are distinct advantages in using unstructured interviews when conducting field research. In particular, unstructured interviews allow the participants to guide the interview questions toward issues that they deem important, and this indeed happened to me numerous times throughout the interview process. In addition, the unstructured interview creates a less threatening atmosphere in which the informants may feel free to express their opinions. While some of my informants selected themselves (and others) for interviews, the majority of my subjects were chosen with the assistance of the nuns and administrators at BLIA and the Tzu Chi Foundation. It was through such a process that I was able to interview a careful sample of nuns, administrators, and lay members.

I began my fieldwork in Edmonton in January, 2002 with an administrator for the Buddha's Light International Association. I spent almost two hours with him at our first meeting, as he was kind enough to both answer my questions and explain his own version of the history of the Buddhist organization in Taiwan and in North America. During one of four follow-up interviews with him over the course of January and February, I was introduced to their nun (who was Taiwanese and had recently arrived from Malaysia), two temple organizers, and eleven lay members. With the help of a translator I spent thirty minutes with the temple's nun, visiting her again in November 2003 in order to cross-check a few of her earlier comments. The month of March was spent interviewing the group's lay members and speaking with members of their youth group. I spoke with seven women and four men ranging in age from thirty-five to sixty, the average interview being about twenty-five minutes. In November 2003, I returned to re-investigate some of my questions and at this time we sat down together as a group, the men and women feeling more comfortable to express themselves now that both my face and my questions were familiar. I also interviewed the single Caucasian member of this chapter of BLIA, first in his office for an hour, and later as part of the interviews that took place at the temple.

When I visited the Vancouver chapter of BLIA in June 2002, I spent thirty minutes with one of the five nuns present at the temple. We met on three separate occasions for thirty minutes each time, and she was extremely helpful in both answering my questions and explaining her understanding of the evolution of BLIA in its journey from Taiwan to North America. I was sorry to see that she was traveling when I returned to visit the temple a year later, in August 2003. As with my fieldwork in Edmonton, in Vancouver I was aided by the kindness of a temple administrator. After an hour of discussion I was given a tour of the temple and its classes (some of which were in session and I was able to sit in on), and introduced to a group of six women who were preparing the vegetarian lunch and willing to chat with me while they worked. A return visit a week later allowed for more structured interviews with these women, along with interviews with two men who had joined their wives for services. As with the Edmonton chapter, there is a large youth group in Vancouver, which gave me the opportunity to spend time with eight young men and women – many of whom I was able to visit again when I returned in November 2003.

Along with these structured and unstructured interviews in Edmonton and Vancouver I also attended twelve temple services, four study groups, two Taiwanese Buddhist events, two youth groups, one Sunday School Service, and handed out thirty general-information surveys. While participation in temple services and events was extremely helpful both in gathering information and in gaining trust, the surveys were completely unsuccessful due to a significant language barrier. In fact, after leaving the surveys with temple organizers at BLIA for two weeks, they were returned to me unanswered with the profuse apologies of temple staff. Fortunately, through casual conversation, observation, and formal interviews, my questions were answered in the end.

My fieldwork among members of the Tzu Chi Foundation was slightly different than that of BLIA. At the time of my fieldwork, the Tzu Chi Foundation had members in Calgary and Vancouver, rather than Edmonton and Vancouver. It is important to note, however, that during the year following my research, sixty-five new members of the Tzu Chi Foundation were recorded in Edmonton. Additionally, the locations of the Tzu Chi Foundation were different from BLIA, in that they were not temples, but instead simply meeting facilities. I visited the Vancouver chapter of Tzu Chi in June 2002, and I spent three weeks interviewing the men and women who volunteered their time at the Foundation and its local interests. Over the course of three weeks I interviewed eight women and two men, visiting each three times for about twenty minutes of unstructured discussion. As there were no services or festivals to attend (members focus on volunteer efforts rather than Buddhist practices), on my return visits in August and November 2003, I instead went with members as they visited the hospital, provided food to the elderly, and met with local youth groups.

In Calgary the Tzu Chi Foundation is run from the home of two well-meaning members. Still in its earliest phase, the organization has a handful of members who come and go as they choose. Unlike the Vancouver chapter, this group is made up of mostly twenty-something men and women, who joined with one or another parent, and attend meetings when they can fit it into their schedule. I spent two hours at the home of the founding members in October 2002, returning a month later to interview four other local members in both group and individual interviews. I returned recently (November 2003) in order to observe a meeting and document the growth of the group – or lack thereof. Members were friendly and helpful, and this small Tzu Chi group actually provided an important contrast to the other chapters, as well as insight into the difficulty in gaining members in a new city.

My goal when beginning this research was to add to the anthropological insight with regard to both ethnic identity and modernity, and to the link between religious practice and group solidarity in a multiethnic, multireligious country like Canada. An ethnography (or in my case, a thesis) often becomes a written representation of a culture, or the selected aspects of a culture. As John Van Maanen (1988) argues, ethnographic writings can (and do) inform human conduct and judgment in innumerable ways by pointing to the choices and restrictions that reside at the heart of social life. It is my hope that this research project will provide not only academia with new insights, but will also provide groups like the Tzu Chi Foundation with further insight into future possibilities regarding membership and outreach programs. Such organizations play not only an important role among immigrant populations in the global ecumene, but also provide important outreach services around the world. More importantly, it is my hope that this research will provide new insight regarding the role that religion and ethnic identity perform in the process of cultural assimilation.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESEARCH RESULTS

Introduction

The Buddha's Light International Association and the Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation are two religious organizations that have managed the complicated move onto the stage of daily life and social engagement. This is a particularly significant move for Buddhism, which in the past has been closely tied to the 'other-worldly' philosophies coming out of the East. Unlike traditional Buddhism, these modern Buddhist organizations place significant emphasis on living the religion on a practical, daily basis as opposed to the conventional emphasis on following an austere life or chanting the Buddha's name in order to reach enlightenment. Therefore, while my wider topic area is the link between religion and ethnicity among immigrant Buddhists in Canada, the Tzu Chi Foundation and the Buddha's Light International Association act as important case studies for my research question. After months of careful research I discovered that while these two Taiwan-based Buddhist groups have distinct methods and motives, the goal of both organizations is the recruitment of new members on a global scale through the modernization and adaptation of the Buddhist philosophy. Yet through interviews and participant observation I learned that the efforts of these organizations have produced unexpected results, which while still desirable, are far afield from the objectives of their founders. Consequently, the results of their painstaking effort has not been the coming together of East and West under one religious banner, but rather a tightening of ethnic boundaries and the solidarity of Chinese immigrants in Canada, providing their community with emotional and financial support, business and career opportunities, and educational and health services that might otherwise have been out of reach.

In conducting this research I visited three additional Chinese Buddhist groups and one Western Buddhist group in order to provide contrast and comparison to the two case studies. Thus, after a brief introduction to the Tzu Chi Foundation and the Buddha's Light International Association, this chapter moves on to an examination of Chinese Buddhism in Canada in terms of how these immigrant groups are adapting their transplanted religion to suit their particular needs in Canada. Members of these Chinese Buddhist groups are adapting their belief system only as far as it suits the needs of their community, focusing the bulk of their efforts on the creation and maintenance of the ethnic solidarity of the group. It is from this discussion that I move on to analyze the results of both my literary and field research on the Tzu Chi Foundation and the Buddha's Light International Association.

The Tzu Chi Foundation (The Buddhist Compassion Relief) was founded in 1966 in Taiwan, by Master Cheng Yen and her disciples. Cheng Yen has since attracted more than four million members, who are located in Chinese diaspora communities worldwide (about 26, 000 of which reside in the United States and Canada). The Foundation has done extensive disaster relief work around the world and actively promotes bone marrow transplants, as well as recruiting donors for patients in need. The Tzu Chi Foundation has also joined forces with the Vancouver Hospital and Health Sciences Center in Canada in order to develop a clinical facility devoted to research and public education in alternative and complementary medical care (Shaw, 1999: 1). This organization is unique in the fact that most Chinese Buddhist organizations operate within the boundaries of their ethnic groups, rather than playing an active role in the broader community. In fact, many convert practitioners are unaware of the numerous contributions these groups are making in the creation of North American forms Buddhism. Nevertheless, in one way or another, they are making an effort to build bridges between Western Buddhism and the Buddhist communities overseas.

Following closely behind the Tzu Chi Foundation, the second-largest Chinese Buddhist movement in Canada is Fo Guang Shan Buddhism (or the Buddha's Light International Association). The smaller, branch temples of this religious organization that abound in Canada and the United States, are called the International Buddhist Progress Society. Fo Guang Shan Buddhism was founded in 1967 by Master Hsing Yun, a prominent figure in the ongoing revival of Buddhism in Taiwan. While in Taiwan, Hsing Yun witnessed the emergence of a booming economy and experienced first hand the kind of social transformations that accompany rapid social progress. This prompted him to redefine elements of the Chinese tradition in order to address the needs of daily life in an increasingly consumer-driven, urban, and industrial society (Hsing Yun, 1999: 13). His philosophy has been described as "humanistic Buddhism", in which the Pure Land tradition has been recast as an optimistic vision for the betterment of human society. Hsi Lai (or "Coming to the West") temple is an extensive monastic compound in the Los Angeles metropolitan area that serves as the American headquarters of this organization. In addition to religious programs and retreats, this center offers classes in Chinese language and literature, martial arts, painting, and singing. Most members are ethnic Chinese, but all ethnic groups and communities are encouraged to participate and to become members (anon., n.d.#1: 2). These two Taiwan-based religious organizations are demonstrative of the trend of reviving Chinese Buddhism in the West and adapting the religious philosophy around the globe.

The Buddha's Light International Association and the Tzu Chi Foundation not only have traditions that have a documented and dateable history, but they have also taken the liberty to carefully change, reconstruct, and invent a tradition that is more suitable to the times in which we live. Eric Hobsbawm (1983: 1) writes about the creation of invented traditions, and his use of the term applies both to those traditions that are actually invented and formally instituted, as well as those that are emerging in a less easily traceable manner. While BLIA and Tzu Chi do not fit all of Hobsbawm's criteria, these organizations, like many religious groups, do construct their lineages carefully, while also interpreting and reinterpreting their religious beliefs to suit the world in which they hope not only to survive but also to evolve and thrive. The values and norms of behavior that are created not only imply continuity with the past, but also establish the connections needed to link modern Buddhism with the traditional Buddhism of 2500 years ago. The result of this is more than simply the evolution and expansion of these particular organizations. As my research demonstrates, the reinterpretation of Buddhism by the Tzu Chi Foundation and the Buddha's Light International Association has filled an important need for communal solidarity and ethnic identity among Chinese immigrant groups in Canada and around the world.

Chinese Buddhism in Canada

The True Buddha School

My research in Canada has led me to Chinese Buddhist temples that have similarities to those described by Seager and other Buddhist scholars. One example of such a temple is Edmonton's True Buddha School, which is an organization dedicated to

Vajrayana Buddhism. This organization has more than one temple in Edmonton, and the majority of members are ethnic Chinese, many of which are immigrants. However, like many of the temples in North America, the True Buddha School has begun early efforts at reaching out to new members in the interest of spreading their tradition in the West. When I visited the temple in 2001, there were no English translations available for new members, yet by May 2002 the group had translated a number of pamphlets and community announcements. Similarly, members recently began to perform a single weekly service that includes an English translation. The True Buddha School is experiencing the process of revitalization, and the result of this is a growth in members (from fifty to almost one hundred fifty in twenty years), and the recent construction of a large Chinese-style temple on the northeast side of the city.

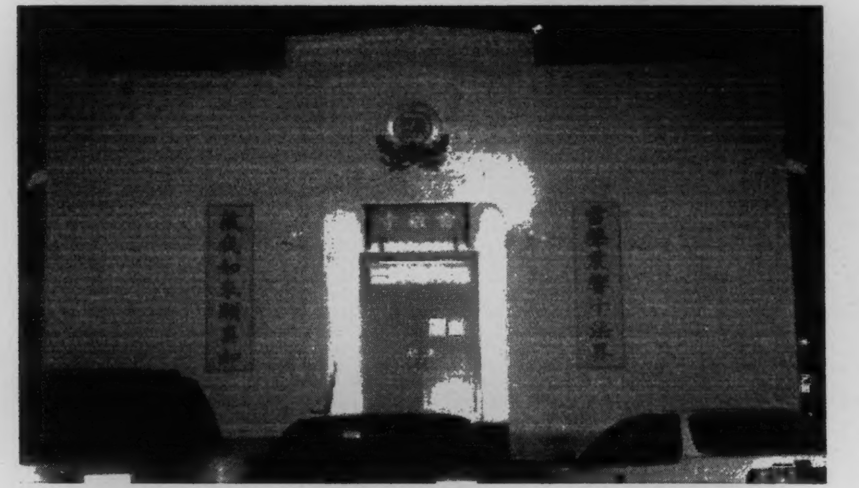

Figure 4.1: The True Buddha School's Original Temple

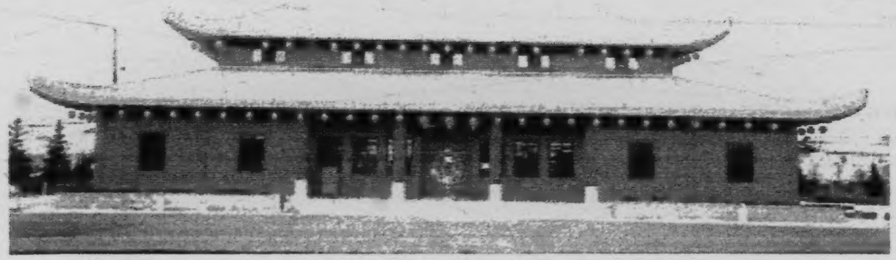

Figure 4.2: The True Buddha School's New Temple

While this revitalization and adaptation is significant, even more significant is the fact that there has been no increase in non-Asian membership, despite the English translations and these early efforts at westernization. On my return to the temple in August 2002, I spoke at length with both administrators and temple members. Because the temple was undergoing the complicated move to the new location, I conducted my follow-up interviews in the original location. This simple temple had three floors, each with a specific purpose. The main floor housed the religious area and an office that included a small store that sold a variety of religious paraphernalia, while the basement contained a large eating area and an ancestral shrine. The top floor was used as a meeting area and community center. I met with temple members in the basement, discussing my questions over a vegetarian lunch. I had participated in the morning services where I met a young woman (Kim) who was willing to work as my translator during the lunch.

Within a few moments Kim and I had gathered two administrators, three older women and their two adult children, two older men, and two young girls. The group agreed to answer my questions, but as it was lunch, they came and went periodically during the discussion. As translation was needed for only two of the older interviewees, conversation flowed comfortably. Many of the members recognized me from my pilot study and the New Year ceremonies I had attended with my husband and children. Of those I interviewed, all agreed that the recent growth of the temple was due to their outreach programs to the local Chinese community. Classes, youth activities, and additional services were added as the new temple was built. In addition, because of the additional space the new temple offered, smaller Buddhist organizations that were dispersed around the city were joining together in a single facility.

When I asked about outreach to the non-Asian community through the translations that had recently been published, one of the older women laughed lightly. All those present (save one) agreed when the woman commented that little or nothing would come of such efforts: "Canadians will come and go here and there. They are not interested in actual practice, just in Buddhism once in a while. We have only two white members and they only come once in a while. Nothing has changed at the new temple. Our numbers have increased dramatically, but in Chinese, Taiwanese, and Vietnamese, not in white or black" (pers. comm., anon., Aug. 8, 2002). When I asked if anyone disagreed, only Jim (one of the two administrators) sounded optimistic in his hope that eventually non-Asians would be drawn to the temple. He concluded that with increased youth group activities, their younger members would eventually bring their non-Asian friends. Similarly, Jim postulated that with a large new temple offering at least a few services in English, Canadians who were already Buddhist may join their temple rather than practising on their own. The others around the table simply smiled and shook their heads in pleasant disagreement.

After an hour of discussion it was clear from the group that while they had experienced an increase in Asian membership, little had changed with regard to non-Asian membership. While it is true that only minimal attempts at modernization have taken place thus far, it is apparent from the comments made during my interview that Western recruitment is a fairly low priority for temple members. Two younger members with whom I spoke professed a desire to practise Buddhism in order to remain connected to their cultural heritage, and the adult children who were present expressed a similar goal. "Our parents emigrated to Canada from China ten years ago and immediately began looking for a Buddhist temple. We lived near Chinatown and through friends found the True Buddha School. Attending services here helped my parents feel comfortable in Edmonton, and it helped my wife and I find friends as well. Actually, I even found a job through someone I met at the community center upstairs." (pers. comm., Kevin, Aug. 8, 2002). In other words, the True Buddha School operates like many other ethnic religious organizations in providing a strong base of support and solidarity for its members while also performing its role as a means for religious ritual.

The Vancouver Guan Yin Buddhist Temple

In June 2002, while in Richmond, British Columbia, I visited the home of the International Buddhist Society. The Guan Yin Buddhist Temple has regular Buddhist ceremonies, lectures, and mediation classes, as well as a renowned bonsai garden, an extensive Buddhist library, and art exhibitions. The temple was constructed under the guidance of the Venerable Guan Cheng over twenty years ago, and it has since become the largest example of Chinese palatial architecture in North America. The temple boasts a white marble Buddha in its Lecture Hall (the only one of its kind), and is currently awaiting the impending arrival of what will be the largest Buddha statue in North America. The statue is currently under construction in China. The giant Buddha Shakyamuni will become the focal point in the Main Gracious Hall, flanked by twenty-foot tall buddhas and bodhisattvas (the statues currently on display in the Gracious Hall will be relocated to the Mediation Hall).

The Guan Yin Temple is unique in Canada as it is listed as a tourist site and thus welcomes numerous visitors to its grounds on a daily basis. Because of its status as a tourist attraction and its many publications and services in English, this temple is an excellent example of a Chinese Buddhist organization that focuses its attention on reaching out to Westerners while also focusing on its own ethnic solidarity. It is clear from simply walking the temple grounds that a great deal of effort has been put into creating an authentic Chinese Buddhist temple with no expense spared. It was hardly surprising that at times there were as many tourists (recognizable by their cameras and wandering manner) walking freely through the temple grounds as there were temple members. It was not until services began that membership increased dramatically, yet even then there was a circle of tourists surrounding the entrance to the hall, cameras snapping at will, employees of the temple eagerly guiding them towards the large store and its religious novelties. All sales from items bought at the store and the local stands are donated directly to the temple and its improvements. My questions were avoided when I inquired about what portion of the sales went to employ the large staff of administrators. In fact, the gentleman who ran the temple refused to answer my questions and asked me to "leave the temple members alone as they have no time to be bothered with my silly questions" (pers. comm., anon., June. 15, 2002).

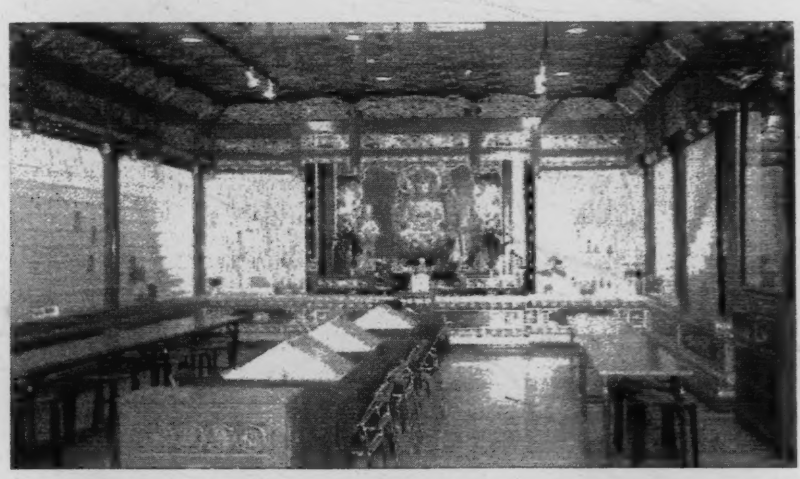

Figure 4.3: The Vancouver Guan Yin Temple's Ancestor Hall

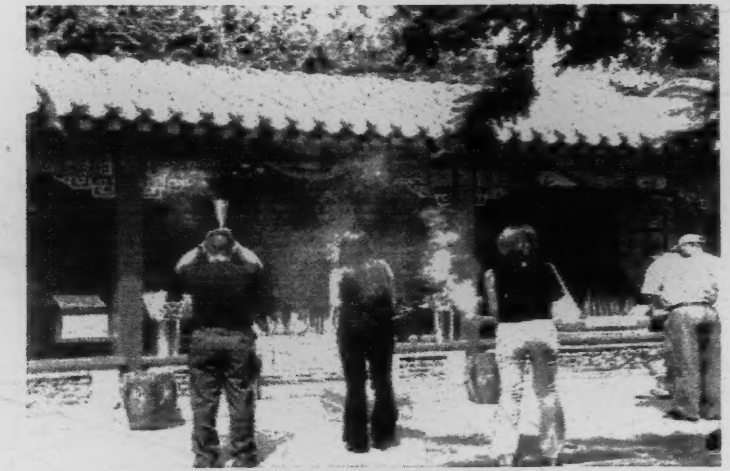

Figure 4.4: Prayers to the Ancestors

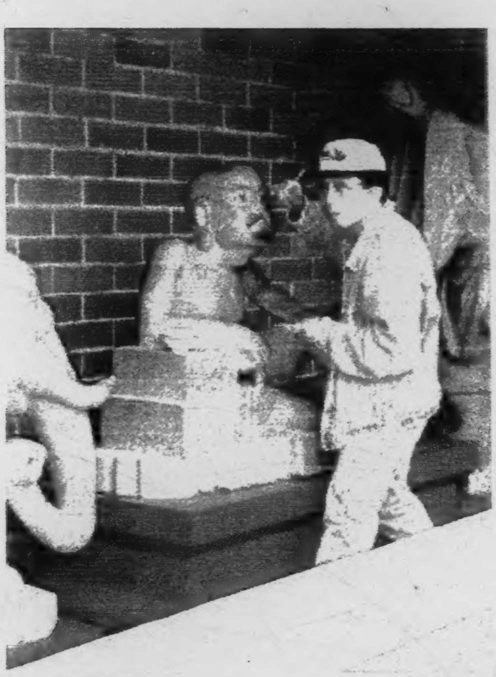

Figure 4.5: An Artist Touches Up His Work

Each time I visited the Guan Yin Temple, there were hundreds of members and visitors streaming through the temple grounds. Some were visitors and were taking pictures of the magnificent architecture and statues, while other visitors were locals who were there to enjoy the (relative) peace of the large gardens. Members, too, were present on the temple grounds and were offering incense before they made their way to one of the chanting services, classes, workshops, and meditation rooms. As I passed the large cafeteria, I saw twenty or thirty people organizing the vegetarian meal[14], along with a few small children running through the dining hall, grabbing pieces of fruit off the large trays that had been set out earlier. I also watched a crew of workers begin the preparations for the new statue in the Main Gracious Hall. There were workers and monks cleaning or improving areas throughout the grounds. I met one temple member who was an artist, and in the process of touching up the faces on some of the statues in one of the small halls.[15] He explained to me that all workers on the grounds were temple members or volunteers from the local Chinese community. Although I was visiting the temple to merely observe and gather a few documents, I did have the opportunity to speak with a few people. One of the newer administrators was willing to walk with me, and as we strolled through the temple grounds he took great pride in showing me the new construction that was underway.

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[14] It is interesting to note that while most Buddhist temples offer the vegetarian meal at no cost at all to members and visitors who care to attend, the Guan Yin Temple charges a fee for all meals and classes. The exception to this is one or two yearly activities. For example, on May 19th there is a lunch provided after the "Offering of Lanterns to Buddha Shakaymuni". This lunch is offered to cultivate the merits of friendship.

I also spoke to one young woman who was offering incense with her grandmother. She and her grandmother were there for the Protector of Buddha Birthday (General Guan Yu). I attended the service which lasted from 9:30am to 11:30am. The ceremony was composed of chanting for making wishes: three hundred people gathered together in the Main Hall and chanted together for two hours (with one fifteen minute break). The service was in Mandarin, but the administrator (Tim) who had given me the tour, stood beside me and helpfully explained the ceremony.[16] The first round of chanting was offering praise and inviting all of the Buddhas to the temple – this lasted for about fifteen minutes. The second part of the service involved more chanting, but at this point an offering of rice was placed outside the Main Hall. This is the "Grand Offering", and the rice was provided as an offering to the wandering or lost souls. The congregation then invited the Medicine Buddha to enter the temple, and special mantras were directed towards him. Next, there were prayers for the ancestors, and new mantras were offered in order to cleanse and purify them (this lasted for five minutes).

Finally, the temple members performed a set of prayers to invite Guan Yin to give the ancestors blessings and assist them in their ascent to paradise. Shortly after the chanting ended, incense was offered to General Guan Yu and prayers were recited to honor him. All members performed the Grand Bowing (three prostrations, touching your folded hands to your head, chest, waist, before moving to your knees and touching your head to the ground), and the service was finished. When I spoke to the young woman after the service, she said that she only joins her grandmother for special celebrations like this. She said that she does volunteer for the New Year Flower Bazaar, where she helps sell items like puddings and deserts, flowers and carvings, calligraphy and charms, and so on. Her grandmother, on the other hand, comes every Sunday (brought by her children or grandchildren), and while she spoke no English she managed to relate through her granddaughter that I should come back on July 6th, because the temple celebrates Honoring Senior Citizen Day.

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[15] Please see the above pictures.

[16] While the grounds were filled with Western tourists, I was the only visitor who actually came inside and took part in the ceremony. There were, however, a number of visitors gathered outside the doors to watch.

Her granddaughter laughingly explained that Senior Citizen Day is her grandmother's favorite Buddhist celebration because the day is dedicated to her and her friends. Many older men and women gather at the temple for food and activities (musical entertainment, a lucky draw, offering of incense, prayers to the ancestors, among others). The event lasts for two days, and many of the older members of the community (both Buddhist and Christian) see the celebration as a means to socialize and feel honored. All members of the local community are welcome. In addition, the Guan Yin Temple offers vegetarian meals and snacks from 11:30am to 3:00pm daily, and every Sunday it offers Chinese Sunday School for $20.00/month. Meditation classes are offered in English every Saturday from 9:00am to 11:30am in the Meditation Hall (the rear building of the temple). The temple also offers worship and activities every day of the year – from the celebration of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva's birthday on April 1st, to Amitabha Buddha's birthday on Dec. 20th. Every Sunday, worship of the Buddha of Medicine is offered and on every new and full moon they celebrate the worship of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva.[17]

While I was only able to interview a few members at the Guan Yin Temple, it was obvious from simple observation that this temple is unique in its size and use. Those to whom I spoke confirmed my assumption that even with the many English services and its status as a tourist attraction, the Temple had only one or two Caucasian members. Westerners are used as a source of income in order to improve the Temple and its grounds, and according to Tim there was little desire to assimilate with Western culture or bring in Western converts. Instead, the maintenance and growth of the temple is the primary goal, the secondary goal being the continued strength of the Chinese Buddhist community in the Richmond area. The young woman I spoke with confirmed that her grandmother enjoyed coming to the Temple because she could spend time with her friends. Her parents too, found strength in numbers, becoming members in order to meet people in the community and find which schools their children should attend, which areas of the city were best to live, where good jobs could be found, and so on. Obviously I would need to interview many more temple members in order to support such statements from the young girl, her grandmother, and Tim. Yet since my research was focused on two specific case studies I did not have the time available to focus more attention on this particular Buddhist organization. Nonetheless, it was clear from my time at the Guan Yin Temple that, while unique in many ways, this temple shared similarities with the True Buddha School. Both groups were experiencing continuous growth, both were adding English components, and both focused on the solidarity of their own group rather than assimilation with the West. Finally, both demonstrate the important link between ethnicity and religion and how the two interact among Buddhist groups in Canada.

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[17] While Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva and Guan Yin are one in the same, Buddhist groups often use the names interchangeably.

Vancouver Tung Lin Kok Yuen Canadian Society

A smaller version of the Guan Yin Temple is the Tung Lin Kok Yuen Canadian Society, which is a Vancouver Buddhist group that is based out of Hong Kong. The original Lin Kok Temple was founded in 1935 by the (late) Lady Ho Tung in Hong Kong. It was later expanded and brought to Vancouver with the objective of both fostering Buddhist education in the West, and training locals in the community to be knowledgeable in Buddhism. The temple is housed in a massive stone building, and the inside has the appearance that it has been carved from the side of a mountain. The large stairwell that leads to the meditation room and Main Hall is constructed of thick, gray stone, and the walls of the office and gift-shop are constructed in a similar manner. The gift-shop is filled with books and magazines for sale, as well as a variety of Chinese charms and jewelry, and statues of buddhas and bodhisattvas. Upstairs, the meditation room is warm and peaceful, with cushions and benches provided for those who attend. The Main Hall is large and, like most Chinese temples, contains tables for offerings of flowers and fruit, as well as an area where one can light candles and burn incense. At the furthest end of the Hall is a long line of golden buddhas and bodhisattvas, and covering the walls are hundreds of tiny lights that can be purchased as blessings.

Like the International Buddhist Society, this temple offers courses in English on the practice of Buddhism, meditation, and a variety of Buddhist issues. They also have an Internet site and an email address set up for easy access to Buddhism and the Temple. Along with the courses and lectures that are offered, this temple also offers dharma practice and a study group led by the Venerable Guren Martin, who is a Ch'an Buddhist from Hong Kong. Venerable Guren Martin is available in the temple for four hours every day to answer questions or solve problems concerning both religion and his followers' daily lives. When I visited the temple in June 2002, Guren Martin was on a semi-annual trip to Hong Kong so I was unable to speak with him. Although this particular temple is not related to my two case studies, it is related to the overall topic of Chinese Buddhism in Canada and the link between religion and ethnicity. Like the other groups I have discussed, this organization has roots in its homeland as well as in its adopted community. Moreover, while the group offers a variety of English translations, its membership is purely Asian and few efforts have been made to assimilate with the culture and people of Canada. As I will demonstrate later in the chapter, this is contrary to the motives of the Tzu Chi Foundation and the Buddha's Light International Association

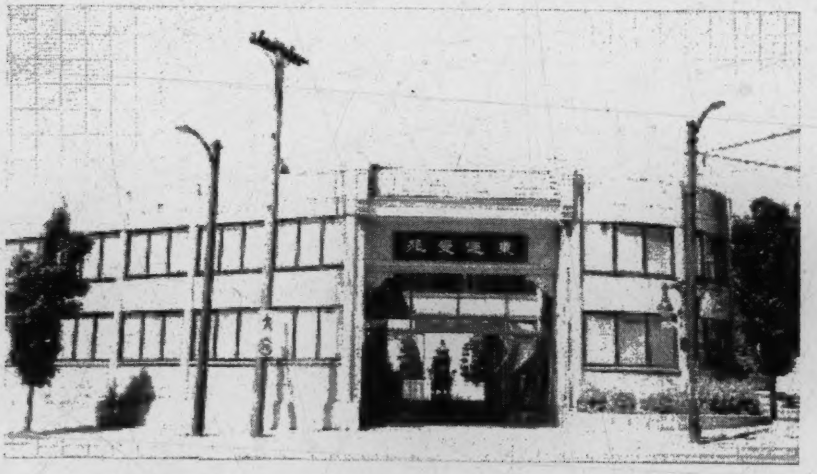

Figure 4.6: The Vancouver Tung Lin Kok Yuen Canadian Society

Edmonton Buddhist Priory

I visited the Buddhist Priory in February 2003, because it was a Buddhist organization that was made up of solely Western converts and I thought it would be a useful comparison. Followers of the Soto Zen (Japanese) and Ts'ao-Tung (Chinese) forms of Buddhism, and practitioners of Serene Reflection Meditation, this North American Buddhist group is based in the Shasta Abbey in California. Along with its homes in California and Edmonton, this organization is also based in Oregon, the United Kingdom, Germany, and the Netherlands. The Head of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives (the official title of the organization) is Reverend Master Daizui MacPhillamy (anon., 1999: 1). This organization is an international Buddhist community that consists of both male and female priests and laity. Members see the purpose of their Priory as a means of coming to know and live the buddha-nature that resides within all of us. They see meditation not as a means to an end, but instead as a method to harmonize oneself with the source of compassion, love, and wisdom that resides naturally within all human beings. For members of the Buddhist Priory, meditation is the foundation of Buddhist practice, and it is thus combined with the traditional Buddhist precepts (anon., 1999: 2).

Another key aspect of practice for this Western Buddhist group is mindfulness in daily life. Being aware and mindful should extend to all one's actions of daily life (in body, speech, and mind). Training with others in a priory or meditation group is seen as the best way to deepen practice of Serene Reflection Meditation. It is only in this manner that one has the ability to study and train with a living teacher who can express the dharma in a direct way – a way in which books and ideas cannot (anon., 1999: 5). Similarly, it is believed that through practice with fellow trainees one can clarify one's understanding of meditation and the Precepts. Because of this, the Priory in Edmonton schedules numerous services throughout the week. The leader of the Edmonton Chapter is Reverend Dominic Lloyd, who holds services out of a small house near the University of Alberta. The Reverend has been a monk for twenty-one years, establishing the present chapter of the Priory in 1979. Reverend Lloyd provides meditation and morning services every day (except Tuesdays) at 7:00am. He offers a mid-day service by appointment at 3:00pm every day other than Monday, and meditation and walking meditation every Sunday from 7:30am to 10:00am. The main meeting for the group is on Wednesday at 7:30pm, when members gather for an evening service, meditation and vespers, followed by tea and a dharma talk (www.serenereflections.ca, Nov. 21, 2003).

The Edmonton chapter has twenty members of both sexes, ranging in age, education, and occupation (members included a financial advisor, a university professor, and many university students). Although the group practises Japanese Soto Zen Buddhism, all current members are Caucasian. This particular group began over twenty years ago with thirteen members (including children) living together in the same house, while practising Buddhism together. None of these original members are members of the group today. Every semester the Buddhist Priory receives half a dozen students from Edmonton's Augusta College as part of their Religious Studies curriculum (none of whom have become members of the group). I spoke to two of the students who were attending the Wednesday service, and while neither had an interest in becoming Buddhist, both appeared delighted to be there that night. Unfortunately, I do not have detailed interviews with any of the members of this organization, because Reverend Lloyd would only consent to my presence if I gave my word not to take notes – and not to "bother" his members with interviews. As Reverend Lloyd explained it:

> There is a large gulf between academic study of Buddhism and the practice of Buddhism. If you actually want to understand anything about Buddhism, you should know that you cannot succeed by academic study. Academic study, by its very nature, systematically filters out everything of importance since the important things are neither scholastic nor objective, and have nothing to do with facts. The number of people who attend various things, for example, is utterly irrelevant to any real understanding. If you are not investigating Buddhism to understand, then why are you doing it? You are welcome to come on Wednesday as a participant, but please do not take notes or ask any 'interview' questions. We have to respect the sincerity of the people who come here to do Buddhist training. They are not to be 'studied' (pers. comm., Feb. 23 2003).

When I visited Reverend Lloyd at his house for a Wednesday service, and since I arrived thirty minutes early Reverend Lloyd agreed to speak to me about his organization. It was then that I learned that it was customary for new members to come thirty minutes early, in order for instructions regarding meditation and the dharma talk. It was because of this that I was able to ask a few casual questions of the Augusta students, who had arrived early as instructed. The Buddhist Priory's tradition includes the use of an altar and a ceremonial. The altar provides members with the opportunity to light candles and offer incense in a manner that will quiet and focus the mind in preparation for meditation.

Reverend Lloyd's altar included a small statue of the Buddha, a picture of a bodhisattva, artificial flowers, a candle, an offering cup, and an incense bowl. The Reverend's house is small, but it is also warm and peaceful. The space dedicated to the meditation services and the ceremonial is decorated with pictures of bodhisattvas, along with words of wisdom from a variety of sutras. Reverend Lloyd explained that he usually has twelve members joining him for the Wednesday service (there were ten the evening I attended), four members usually attend the walking meditation on Sundays, and three members attend the morning services.

On Wednesdays Reverend Lloyd gives a dharma talk, or plays a tape that has been recorded by another monk. He explained that the point of these talks is to help people put Buddhism into practice in daily life. The Reverend explained that most members meditate at home once or twice a day, and all should be making an effort to meditate in the midst of daily activities whenever they can. According to Reverend Lloyd, the ceremonial that I attended is seen by members to be a "vital aspect of practice" (pers. comm., February, 2003). The ceremonial is the group's primary way of learning scriptures and committing them to memory (this is done through the musical chanting of the services). From my outsider's perspective, it seemed that the ceremonial took the stillness of seated meditation and then applied it to the group chanting of typical Buddhist services. The members bowed, listened, chanted, walked – all in carefully choreographed meditated peace. The Reverend explained in our initial conversation that members are meant to use their mind to read and understand the teachings, and then use their bodies to express the teachings during ceremonies.

The Edmonton Branch of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives ordained four lay members on October 12th, 2002. The ceremony was performed by Reverend Lloyd, and it was followed by a pot-luck lunch for eighteen people. Five more members were ordained on July 28th, 2002 (www.serenereflections.ca, 2003). In September of the same year, Reverend Lloyd traveled to the Northern Lakes College in Slave Lake, Alberta, in order to give meditation instruction (fifteen people attended). On April 7th, 2002, postulate Sharon Stuart was ordained as a novice monk (she is a Westerner) and given the religious name Houn Irene, meaning "peace within the dharma cloud". In doing so, she agreed to follow the Precepts of this particular Buddhist organization: do not steal, covet, lie, sell the wine of delusion, speak against others, devalue others; do not be mean in giving either the dharma or wealth, do not be angry, and do not defame the Three Treasures (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha) [www.serenereflections.ca, 2003]. It is clear from the example of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives that Western converts have continued to adapt Buddhism in order to suit their own needs and make the religion their own. Unlike the Chinese Buddhist organizations, however, there is no focus on ethnic identity or community solidarity – nor is there a focus on outreach to the larger Western community. The Order of Buddhist Contemplatives focuses their primary attention on their individual growth and development through Buddhist philosophy.

Case Study One: The Tzu Chi Foundation

Founded in 1966 by Buddhist nun Cheng Yen, this organization is larger than Fo Guang Shan by three million members and occupies a very different niche in the modern world of Buddhism. Since its founding, the growth of the association has been staggering. At its inception the group had thirty members who had raised just over seven hundred (U.S.) dollars. By 1986, the membership had grown to over eighty thousand, by 1990 had broken the one million-member mark, and just five years later there were four million members. Today, Tzu Chi is the largest civic organization in Taiwan, claiming nearly 20% of the island's population (Huang & Weller, 1998: 379). These members reside around the world, in countries such as the United States, Japan, Canada, England, Malaysia, and Singapore. One in ten Taiwanese is a member of this group, and all are proud to note that by 1994 the relief fund stood at NT $1.7 billion (US$ 61 million) (Jones, 1999: 213).

Tzu Chi is the only social association in Taiwan that is larger than the Nationalist Party, and since the group does not emphasize joining a monastery, the vast majority of followers are lay people.[18] The organization is notable for its concern with secular action, and because of this it downplays many traditional aspects of Buddhism, such as sutra singing and philosophical discussion (Weller, 2000: 491). Their emphasis is consistently on this world and the creation of a Pure Land on earth, by bringing the

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[18] While the Tzu Chi Foundation has no sangha of its own, members may join a sangha through other Buddhist organizations, such as the Buddha's Light International Association.

Buddhist message of simplicity and compassion into all aspects of peoples' daily lives. A Buddhist group like the Tzu Chi Foundation provides followers with moral direction at a time when people feel that their older moralities are deteriorating under the economic and political pressures of current Taiwanese life (Weller, 2000: 493).

Among new religious movements in Taiwan, Tzu Chi is both the most global, and the most popular with women. The movement offers a way of maintaining the conservative image of women as nurturing mothers, while at the same time valuing the simple life that is seen as an ideal for many. When this is combined with the opportunity to put aside the social barriers that have limited women's actions to the home, Tzu Chi becomes a means to experience a new way of life that is still acceptable within the local society. Weller (2000: 493) points out that the Tzu Chi Foundation has also thrived for political reasons. Yinshun[19] had been silenced by the Buddhist establishment (with government support) late in the 1950s, because his work appeared to be too close to leftist agitation. However, by the 1970s, when the Tzu Chi Foundation began to grow, Taiwan's authoritarian government had become extremely laissez-faire on social issues. Weller (2000: 493) suggests that this paved the way for the Taiwanese government to encourage the growth of Tzu Chi, since it met with genuine social needs without needing government involvement. While Cheng Yen has never offered direct political support for the Taiwanese government, and her organization is generally seen as independent, there was certainly a happy coincidence of purpose in the growth of Tzu Chi and the state of Taiwan at the time.

The Founder

As outstanding as the membership numbers of Tzu Chi are, what is more significant is that the center of this group is a single, frail woman who relies on her own charisma to lead four million people.[20] Cheng Yen is sixty-seven years old and weighs barely ninety pounds, but according to my contacts she walks with a graceful gait 'like a wave of mist' – yet so swiftly that an ordinary woman would hardly be able to keep up with her. The first document I was given by the Tzu Chi Foundation was *Ten Thousand Lotus Blossoms of the Heart*, written by member Douglas Shaw. In it, I discovered that this delicate woman with a heart condition so severe she cannot leave the island, is seen by her followers as a bodhisattva of compassion on earth – the result of which is the ability to lead the world without leaving her home in Taiwan. In accordance with the Buddhist concept that "one hand works as one thousand hands, and one eye sees as one thousand eyes", millions of Tzu Chi members follow in Cheng Yen's footsteps and serve as the eyes and hands of Guan Yin (Shaw, 1999: 2).

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[19] Yinshun was Cheng Yen's teacher and will be discussed in more detail shortly.

[20] Cheng Yen is known to be an extremely eloquent speaker in the Taiwanese dialect (Hokkien), which would make her the only national-level Buddhist leader in Taiwan to embrace the Taiwanese dialect (Jones, 1999).

Cheng Yen serves as the primary symbol for the Foundation, and photographs of her adorn every building and every publication. Moreover, she seems to inspire her followers with her life story and the fact that despite poverty and poor health, she has accomplished numerous great things. Cheng Yen was born in a small town in central Taiwan on May 14th, 1937. She was well known in the town for her devotion to her parents and her traditional Chinese virtue of filial piety (Shaw, 1999: 3). After her father's death, Cheng Yen sought comfort at the Tzu Yun Temple that was near her home and eventually made the difficult decision to become a nun (difficult because Cheng Yen was the eldest child and her mother was in poor health and in need of care). At Tzu Yun Temple, Cheng Yen met Master Hsiu Tao, and it was through the inspiration of this nun that Cheng Yen felt the urge to spread compassion throughout the world. Cheng Yen believed that the love of one's family should be extended to all society and to all creatures, and thus decided to leave her home and family and find a temple where she could take refuge in the Buddha (Shaw, 1999: 5).[21]

In 1963 Cheng Yen asked one of the most respected dharma masters in Taiwan, Venerable Master Yinshun to be her Master. When people speak of Buddhist philosophy, the name Master Yinshun is no doubt mentioned often. His numerous writings are seen by many as restoring the fundamental meaning of Buddhism, while also opening a new dimension for people to investigate Buddhist doctrines. Now aged ninety-seven, Master Yinshun has been dubbed "the Gem of the Buddhist Land" or simply "the Mentor" by most Buddhists in Taiwan (Pan Shuen, 2002: 35). The Venerable Master rarely took disciples, but Shaw (1999: 6) explains that he "took one look at the frail girl who had shaved her own head and immediately consented". During her years with Yinshun, Cheng Yen was taught that her main goal as a nun should be to bring Buddhism to all living things. According to Shaw, Cheng Yen has kept the advice from her Master in mind at all times, embracing all living beings in her heart without a trace of regret and continuing to make visits to her old Master today (Shaw, 1999: 6).

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[21] For the full story on why Cheng Yen became a nun please see Appendix One.

Since her work began, Cheng Yen has been honored with a number of awards. In 1991, Cheng Yen was awarded the Philippine Magsayay Award for "reawakening Taiwan's modern people to the ancient Buddhist teachings of compassion and charity" (www.tzuchi.org/global/, 2003). In 1996, Cheng Yen was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, and in 2000 she received the Year 2000 Noel Foundation Life Award[22]. In addition, in 2001 Cheng Yen received an Honorary Doctorate in Social Sciences from the University of Hong Kong, and the following year she received the "Outstanding Buddhist Woman Award" from the World Buddhist University (www.tzuchi.org/global/, 2003). Although this list of awards is impressive, what is more impressive is Cheng Yen's continued dedication to her organization. Every month at the Abode of Still Thoughts in Hualien, Master Cheng Yen and her disciples distribute food to the poor. In the past three decades, Cheng Yen has led her followers in coming to the aid of more than one million people, both in Taiwan and abroad. I have no doubt that it is through Cheng Yen's guidance and encouragement that the Tzu Chi Foundation has grown into the global Buddhist charity organization that we see today.

The Organization

Cheng Yen and her followers believe that the real meaning of Buddhism is to relieve peoples' suffering in both body and mind, and that this cannot be done simply through studying sutras. Cheng Yen explains in her writings that the poor need to be helped with kindness and compassion instead of years of studying complicated Buddhist texts. Therefore, Cheng Yen has always used simple words and touching life stories in order to teach the true meaning of Buddhism to her followers. As she explains it, the earlier people begin to do good deeds, the more people will be redeemed from their misery (Shaw, 1999: 11). Thus, Cheng Yen began her group with the motto of "fifty cents (CND$0.03) can also save people", and a small group of housewives launched their first mission. In 1969, they constructed the Abode of Still Thoughts on a 3.6 acre lot, and not a cent of donations was used to build the temple. By 1986, they had built the first hospital in Taiwan that served the public regardless of their ability to pay. In 1989, Cheng Yen established the Junior College of Nursing, and in 1994, the Tzu Chi College of Medicine. The latter includes departments of medicine, public health, medical technology, and graduate schools of nursing and medicine. At this college, humanitarian studies are put on the same level as the medical courses. The hope is that doctors will not only be talented but also compassionate.

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[22] The Noel Foundation Life Award is awarded by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the Noel Foundation, and international non-profit organization based in Los Angeles, USA. The Foundation encourages the advancement of women in the United States and around the world, the mission being "to help those most in need to help themselves". Past Life Award recipients included Mother Teresa and Lady Margaret Thatcher. Source: www.ictr.org/ENGLISH/PRESSREL/1999

Cheng Yen is known for her terse advice on how to live with problems, rather than how to transcend them. She urges people to cut down on conspicuous consumption and to devote their resources and energy to helping the poor and sick. Member testimonials tend to contrast current happiness with former lives of dissolution and dissatisfaction (Weller, 2000: 491). Much of the movement is in fact focused on the remaking of the self, and this is done through volunteer and charity work. Serious followers keep a vegetarian diet and are required to abstain from alcohol. The uniforms that are worn by members mark group membership. Rather than traditional Buddhist robes that are worn over street clothes, these uniforms range from dresses to vests. Therefore, there is a clear emphasis on the secular world, rather than the sacred world of sectarian temples (Weller, 2000: 492).

The umbrella organization (the Tzu Chi Merit Association) is divided into two divisions: the Tzu Chi Foundation proper, and the volunteer organization. The Foundation (with Cheng Yen as chairperson of the board) is a registered nonprofit group in Taiwan and as such has a typical bureaucratic structure of a board of trustees and departments for various administrative functions (Haung & Weller, 1998: 38). There are four main activities of the Tzu Chi Foundation: charity, medicine, education, and culture. The main source of funding and energy for this organization, however, is not the board of directors, but the millions of Tzu Chi members – none of which have an official role in the bureaucratic structure of the Foundation. Many of these members began in the organization through donations of money only, but Cheng Yen expects more from her members than simply monthly donations. Therefore, a large core of the movement consists of people who commit a significant amount of their personal time to Tzu Chi activities – and who draw in new members through stories of their own experiences (Haung & Weller, 1998: 381).

Local offices are organized by county and city in Taiwan, with district leaders appointed from the central organization based mainly on seniority. Local North American chapters are organized in a similar manner, with leaders chosen from the local community and the office duties based on seniority. A new office cannot be established with less than fifty members, and a branch temple must have more than one hundred members. At the most local level, small groups organize a variety of activities in the community, most of which are centered around charitable work for the Foundation. These local groups have the freedom to pursue their own ends within the guidelines that have been set by the Foundation, and the foreign branches operate in much the same way (Haung & Weller, 1998: 384). In Taiwan, a core membership of several thousand carries the main weight, their essential roles being the collection of donations, the solicitation of new members, and identifying families in need. These core members are expected to undertake a relatively ascetic lifestyle, and this is often an extreme contrast to the life of luxury to which the members (most of them wealthy) have been used (Haung & Weller, 1998: 384).

Philosophy and Practice

Local Tzu Chi groups meet regularly (the core members) to chant sutras together or to gather into study groups to discuss how Cheng Yen's writings relate to the problems of every day life. What members see as key events in their Buddhist practice, however, are the talks that are offered by Cheng Yen (in person or on video tape). Groups gather for "communal cultivation" sessions where, after listening to the words of Cheng Yen, they listen to the testimonials of other members (Haung & Weller, 1998: 381). Cheng Yen does speak of Buddhist sutras during her talks, but only if they relate directly to the real experiences of her members. One of her most frequent talks is based on the *Lotus Sutra*, which emphasizes the bodhisattva's role of helping others on the path to enlightenment. As Haung and Weller (1998: 384) report, however, Cheng Yen's discussion quickly turns to concrete action instead of Buddhist philosophy and ritual. Similarly, the testimonials that are offered usually retrace the speaker's path from misery to happiness after joining the organization. In other words, the constant theme of these sessions is the remaking of a person's life through charity and compassion.

Although the Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation has a decidedly "this-world" feel about it, the group remains a Buddhist organization and it does follow Buddhist tradition. For instance, Cheng Yen has outlined their Ten Precepts, and she expects them to be maintained by all members.

> *No killing, no stealing, no fornication*[23]*, no lying.*
> *No drinking, no smoking, no using drugs or chewing betel nuts.*
> *No gambling or speculation.*
> *Follow the traffic rules, respect your parents, be moderate*
> *in speech and attitude.*
> *No participation in politics or demonstrations.* (anon., 1997b: 35)

Cheng Yen has also prescribed very particular forms of etiquette for her followers. She proposed the Four Majesties: "Walk like the wind, stand like a pine tree, sit like a temple bell, lie down like a bow". Cheng Yen has also set down the correct terms of address when practising Buddhism. For example, members should address monks and nuns as 'master' (there is no English equivalent for the term of address for lay disciples) – when the name of a monk or nun is unknown, one should say "Venerable Master, what should I call you" (anon., 1997b: 46). Finally, Tzu Chi has prescribed practices for eating a meal. Before one eats a meal, you are to say "to the buddhas, to the dharma, to the sangha, and to all living beings". You are to hold the bowl with your thumb on the rim and the other four fingers under the bottom (the four fingers should be straight). When you begin to eat, you are to take the first mouthful from the left side of the bowl, and say "I will abstain from evil". When you take the second mouthful, you are to take it from the middle and say "I will cultivate goodness". The third mouthful is taken from the right side, with the words "I vow to redeem all living beings from their suffering" (anon., 1997b: 47). Clearly, while Cheng Yen places a great deal of importance on the secular world, the traditional (and modern) practices of Buddhism have a significant role in her organization as well.

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[23] By saying "no fornication" Cheng Yen is not discouraging members from having sex, but rather

The objectives of the Tzu Chi Foundation are: "purity in our minds, peace in society, and a disaster-free world". The principles of the Foundation are: "kindness, compassion, joy and giving through helping the poor and educating the rich". It is clear from their objectives and principles that Cheng Yen and her followers have a mission that goes far beyond simply the spread of the Buddhist dharma, and instead relates directly to bringing a Pure Land to earth through charity and compassion. In Chinese, "Tzu" means compassion and kindness, and "Chi" means to like to help others. The Tzu Chi logo (which is found on all media and in all offices) is representative of this goal.

Buddhist Compassion Relief
Tzu Chi Foundation Canada

Figure 4.7: The Tzu Chi Foundation Logo

Source: Tzu Chi *Ten Years Review*, 2002

Simultaneously bearing the lotus fruit and flower, the logo is intended to symbolize the idea that members can make the world a better place by planting good seeds in it: "it is only with these seeds can the flowers bloom and bear fruit" (www.tzuchi.org/global/, 2003). The ship in the logo is meant to represent the idea that Tzu Chi steers a ship of compassion in order to save all sentient beings. Finally, the eight petals of the lotus flower are meant to represent the Noble Eight-fold Path, which is crucial to Buddhist philosophy.

The Women of Tzu Chi

In her article on the Tzu Chi Foundation, Lu Hwei-syin (1999: 275) discusses how the organization adapts Buddhist dharma and practice in order to benefit women in

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discouraging members from promiscuous, self-destructive life-styles.

the reconstruction of their lives.[24] She maintains that Cheng Yen's female followers have joined the organization because of a personal need to contribute to Taiwanese society, but that once they are members the women find a community that values them because they are women (ibid., 1999: 281). In China, the social problem for women is that their loyalties are split from the beginning – they are both insiders and outsiders in their families. Women are traditionally destined to leave their natal home in order to join their husband's home and worship their husband's ancestors. The solution for many women is to nurture their own "uterine family" in which they are insiders, yet still fulfilling their husband's desire for a continuing line (Haung & Weller, 1998: 380). Because of the Tzu Chi Foundation, women in Taiwan now have another option – the devotion to a cause of universal welfare that also satisfies traditional filial demands.

In traditional families, the female 'social body' is dedicated to raising children and the male body and mind is dedicated to labor, power, and finance. In such a situation, women are often seen as inferior to men (Lu Hwei-syin, 1999: 285). Lu Hwei-syin (1999: 286) argues that because traditional Buddhist doctrine teaches that the body is meaningless (impermanent) members of the Tzu Chi Foundation find relief from their ties to their female "child-bearing" roles. Moreover, because Tzu Chi does not place emphasis on a sangha or on monastery life, women are able to remain dedicated to both their families and to the spread of Buddhist dharma. Buddhism in China has also meant new options for women (leaving the home to become a nun), but until recently this meant going against the traditions of their community. Since Cheng Yen places a great deal of importance on filial piety, she does not recommend that women leave their families. Instead, her "this-worldly" orientation directs women to become mothers and daughters to all human beings in the world (Haung & Weller, 1998: 387). The Tzu Chi Foundation creates a sphere of action for women which traditional Buddhist choices could not hope to emulate. It requires none of the compromises with domestic life and filial piety that traditional Buddhism has involved.

While the Tzu Chi women do take on (or continue) the traditional role of caregiver, it is not done with the engendered power relations that are a byproduct of life in Taiwan. Instead, members hold the view that all beings are equal, and in doing so they contest traditional gender differences and inequalities (Lu Hwei-syin, 1999: 299). The Tzu Chi Foundation extended this positive ideal of womanhood beyond the family, and applied it to the world – all without creating a negative image of women in Buddhism. Thus, for the first time, a group has reinforced women in their traditional family roles, while also extending them beyond the family. As Haung and Weller (1998: 390) point out, in many other jobs and public positions women are brought into inappropriate commerce with strangers (something that is frowned upon in Taiwanese society). As members of Tzu Chi, however, women maintain their traditional roles yet are able to enter a very modern sphere of action in the world. In addition, those women who are unfulfilled by their family life (but do not wish to enter the complexity of the economic and business world), find their need for simplicity addressed by the charity and relief work of Tzu Chi. While there are women of all ages and stations within the Tzu Chi Foundation, the largest number of female members are married women aged 40-60, having both the time and money to devote to the organization. Following closely behind this group of women are those under the age of 30, who have been encouraged to join by family members or friends in order to work together to promote harmony within the family, the community, and finally, the world.

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[24] This article was published in Chinese and was translated for me by Peter, one of my Chinese tutors.

The Mission of Charity

Within the Tzu Chi Foundation, there are eight fields of "Compassion in Action": charity, medicine, education, culture, international relief, bone marrow donation, environmental protection, and community volunteer services. Among this list are the four missions of the Tzu Chi Foundation, which are present in both Taiwan and abroad: the mission of charity, the mission of medicine, the mission of education, and the mission of culture. In the United States one of the main charity projects organized by the Tzu Chi Foundation is one that the Vancouver members hope to implement in Canada in the near future. The Tzu Chi Foundation has recently completed its third year of book donations to impoverished children in San Bernardino, Southern California (one of the poorest areas in the United States). The program was designed to inspire students, encourage reading, and support neighborhood public elementary schools. The city has twelve elementary schools, and after much evaluation, the volunteers chose the four poorest schools for the book-giving program (Hsu, 2002: 49). In the beginning, when people heard that Tzu Chi was a Buddhist organization, many believed the program was for religious propagation, and thus simply rejected the books. Eventually, however, the books were seen as precious gifts for the children since few owned books of their own. Each book given contained a personalized Tzu Chi bookplate, which is designed with the Tzu Chi logo and decorated with leaves from the bodhi tree (a Buddhist symbol of enlightenment). To the children, the most important element of the bookplate is the line that allows the child to write his or her name thus recognizing that the book belongs to them (Hsu, 2002: 50).

As a special surprise, the children involved with this program are often presented with a familiar character, Clifford the Big Red Dog (a Western character from television and books). After receiving books from Tzu Chi volunteers for three years, the children have begun to link Clifford with the Tzu Chi Foundation. The dog has become the spokesperson for the Tzu Chi book-giving program. Clifford was originally included in order to reach the children by Western means, thus including an aspect of the program that was comforting and familiar. Mr. Hsieh, the Tzu Chi volunteer who dressed up as Clifford, told the other volunteers that it was a priceless experience: "to bring such joy to so many was a wonderful feeling" (Hsu, 2002: 50). Cheng Yen has advised her members to be grateful for the experience to be involved in the charity process. Accordingly, it is this personal interaction that allows Tzu Chi members to both know the joy of giving and the spirit of the Tzu Chi Foundation, and also to reach out and recruit new members for the organization.

In 2002, the Foundation welcomed twenty-six hundred new commissioners (volunteers) and Tzu Cheng Faith Corps (relief workers). Each of these new members was required to register for a training program because "only after they have truly understood the spirit and philosophy of Tzu Chi, should volunteers put it into practice" (Cheng Yen, 2002b: 67). You can see the Tzu Chi commissioners dressed in their "sky-blue, cloud-white" uniforms around the world as they bring relief to disaster victims or charity to those who are in need. In the international community, Tzu Chi volunteers are referred to as "blue angels". Not only are they seen as angels, but because of their clear perception of suffering and their devotion to relieving the pain of others, they are also seen as bodhisattvas (Cheng Yen, 2002b: 67). However, in addition to spreading love to every corner of the world, Tzu Chi members do not forget to give love to their own communities, neighborhoods, or families. Therefore, as they are spreading the message of Cheng Yen to new recruits they are also tightening their own ethnic communities in countries worldwide.

The Mission of Medicine

When Cheng Yen founded the Tzu Chi Foundation it was to help the poor – in her heart, she wanted to eradicate poverty. However, Cheng Yen had not expected that no matter how long she worked towards this goal, there would still be more poor, suffering people. As a result, Cheng Yen came to the conclusion that poverty was the product of sickness, and that if she was to do away with poverty she must first heal the sick. Thus, in 1979 Cheng Yen was determined to build a hospital (Shaw, 1999: 16). Cheng Yen decided to build the hospital far out in the country in Hualien, because she knew from her previous experience that the eastern region of Taiwan lacked an adequate hospital. After six years of early fund-raising, Tzu Chi finally received enough support for the groundbreaking ceremony in 1984. The cost of construction was US$21 million – but at the time fund-raising had only produced US$790,000. As Shaw (1999: 18) reports, however, Cheng Yen's heart was "full of faith and hope for the future". Shaw quotes her as saying, "in building a hospital to save people, the real value is that all the people commit themselves to help in some way, and, little by little, each and every contribution adds up to a large amount. What is even more valuable is that at the same time, it brings out sincere compassion from the hearts of millions of people". Cheng Yen's principles received tremendous public support, and the hospital was finally completed on August 17th, 1986.

The hospital built by Cheng Yen was the first hospital in Taiwan that did not require a deposit fee and that directly admitted all emergency patients (whether patients had money or not, they could receive prompt, professional medical care). The hospital opened with only one hundred beds and four departments, but since then it has been expanded to include almost nine hundred beds and twenty-six departments. Its outpatient clinic treats fourteen hundred patients a day, and the hospital also has a Chinese Medicine Clinic, which has had a great deal of success in treating tumors (Shaw, 1999: 18). As Lu Hwei-syin explains (1999: 292), the hospital changed not only Taiwan's old medical system, but it also changed the impression that many people had of the doctors being cold. The doctors, nurses, patients, and volunteers at Tzu Chi Hospital are like family members, and the mutual trust and sincerity between doctors and patients have made the hospital eastern Taiwan's most moving legend of modern times.

Master Cheng Yen encourages staff and volunteers to follow her principles of "great mercy even to strangers and great compassion for all". In 1996, the hospital set up eastern Taiwan's first palliative care ward for terminally ill patients, with a maximum capacity of twenty-three beds. The hospital is especially noted for its system of volunteer workers. There are volunteers at the hospital day and night in order to care for the spiritual and psychological needs of the patients. The volunteers comfort lonely or elderly patients, cheer up those who are in distress, and encourage anxious family members (Shaw, 1999: 20).[25] The Tzu Chi Foundation continuously looks ahead to the future, and is thus currently planning to construct a disabled children's rehabilitation center in northern Taiwan. The center will provide coordinated care, rehabilitation and special education for handicapped and mentally handicapped patients under the age of eighteen. Similarly, in 1996, ground was broken for the new Tzu Chi Talin Branch Hospital in south-central Taiwan, an area that has few other medical facilities. When it is completed, there will be twenty-one departments, along with a palliative care ward, allowing for terminally ill patients to receive dignified care (Shaw, 1999: 21).

The Mission of Education

Cheng Yen is concerned with education as well as medicine because education is needed in order to bring Buddhism to all generations of people around the world. Cheng Yen's purpose in founding the Tzu Chi Foundation was to help the poor and educate the rich (in the last twenty years Taiwan has experienced the jolt of excessively rapid economic growth, leaving it on the verge of spiritual collapse). Not only is Cheng Yen trying to educate younger generations, she is also trying to steer the rich away from extravagance and decadence. Tzu Chi has accomplished a great deal in the area of charity training for both the rich and the poor, an area that is beyond the reach of formal education (Lu Hwei-syin, 1999: 278). Yet Tzu Chi is extremely dedicated to creating educational institutions both in Taiwan and around the world. While I will discuss the Tzu Chi Academy that was established in British Columbia later, it is first necessary to discuss the fact that Tzu Chi established the first Junior College of Nursing in Taiwan. The College has fourteen hundred students, ten percent of whom are aboriginal girls. These girls are exempted from tuition and are given a monthly allowance with no obligation after graduation (Shaw, 1999: 23). This is one more way for the Tzu Chi Foundation to help a group of people lead happy, productive lives.[26]

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[25] No one knows how it started, but there is a tradition at the Hospital where, at sunset, the doctors, nurses, and patients gather in the halls and stairways. Then, without knowing who first strums the guitar or who sings the first note, everyone sings joyously together (Shaw, 1999: 21).

In a speech that Cheng Yen gave last year to eight hundred graduating students (graduating from Tzu Chi's graduate school, university, college of technology, primary school, and kindergarten), she noted that there is an intimacy between the teachers and students that resembles members of a family. The Tzu Chi volunteers and staff give unconditionally in the hopes that "all seeds planted in Tzu Chi schools will be well nurtured and will one day grow up to be big, firmly rooted trees that shelter people with their shade and bear fruits of love for the whole world" (Cheng Yen, 2002a: 39). In her speech, Cheng Yen stresses that while societies around the world have placed a great deal of importance on a university education, the foundations of our education systems (kindergarten, primary, and secondary schools) have often gone neglected. Therefore, because like other countries China (Taiwan) needs a complete education system, Tzu Chi has rapidly set up a system from kindergarten to graduate school. As Cheng Yen (2002a: 40) explains, "education is like trees, for a tree to be deeply rooted in the soil, it must be properly planted and nourished at the beginning…that is why we place a lot of emphasis at our primary school".

The Mission of Culture

Cheng Yen regards what she deems 'the mission of culture' as extremely important to the progress of the Tzu Chi Foundation. According to her followers, Cheng Yen views culture as a means of educating the world about Buddhism and the importance of compassion. Thus, the Still Thoughts Hall in Hualien has cultural, as well as religious facilities. It is a ten-story hall with offices, libraries, galleries, lecture halls, research rooms, and halls for preaching and meditation. Included in this list is an international conference facility with simultaneous quadrilingual translation capabilities. Furthermore, the Tzu Chi Cultural Center in Taipei produces books, periodicals, audio and videotapes, and radio and television programs. The common element of these items is that they are all simple, easy to understand, and they have the ability to really touch people. In order to use such modern electronic media to promote Buddhism, the Tzu Chi Foundation actually inaugurated its own cable television station on January 1, 1998. Among other educational shows, the station demonstrates how the group's missions are carried out (Shaw, 1999: 27). Since Cheng Yen sees culture as a means of educating the world about Buddhism, her literary and audiovisual developments go far towards reaching her goals.

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[26] There is a special group in this college called the Yi The Mother Association, who are responsible for the spiritual and physical guidance of the students so that they will not go astray and will have loving hearts in their nursing careers in the years to come. There are two "mothers" to every eight girls (Shaw, 1999: 24).

In 1993, the "Tzu Chi World", a feature page of Tzu Chi stories and events, and quotes of Cheng Yen's teachings was published monthly in the *Chinese World Journal Daily*. In 1997, "Fountain of Purity", a Mandarin broadcast program was aired five times per week, and in 1998 the Cantonese version of the show was broadcast ten times per week. In 2000, "Great Love", a one-hour program of selected stories and interviews from the *Great Love Channel* was aired every Saturday on TalentVision in Taiwan (anon., 2002: 13). All of these programs were developed and aired in order to bring the Tzu Chi message of compassion to both Taiwan and the world with the help of satellite television. The Tzu Chi Foundation is using modern means and media in order to promote the importance of its message and in Taiwan and Mainland China it is having some measure of success. In countries such as the United States and Canada, however, ratings for such programs are nonexistent, and few members take the time to tune in.

The (Additional) Mission of Relief Work

As well as their offices in Canada, the Tzu Chi Foundation has offices in Mexico, Brazil, Asia, the Pacific, Europe, South America, Africa, and so on. Members have provided relief donations to Bangladesh in 1991, China (1991-present), Mongolia (1992), Ethiopia and Nepal (1993), Rwanda (1994), Cambodia and Northern Thailand (1994), Chechnya, and South Africa (1995), Afghanistan and Peru (1998), and the list goes on. In 2001, Sister Angela M. Doyle (a Roman Catholic Nun) joined Cheng Yen in Taiwan to help with disaster relief after Typhoon Nari. Sister Angela had been invited to participate in the International Conference of Religious Cooperation that was held in Taipei, and even though she is a Catholic nun, what she shared during the Conference was the "Great Love" spirit of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation (Li Wei-huang, 2002: 70). During the Conference, the two nuns – one Buddhist and one Catholic – strolled hand in hand around the Tzu Chi University campus, and Cheng Yen presented Sister Angela with numerous books, CDs, and magazines from the Tzu Chi Foundation.

As she strolled, Sister Angela could be seen wearing a cross pinned to her left collar, and a Tzu Chi pin on her right collar (the pin was in the shape of the Tzu Chi "dharma ship", which ferries people across the sea of suffering to the shore of peace and joy) [Li Wei-huang, 2002: 71]. Before she left Taiwan, Sister Angela said that she views herself as a Tzu Chi member, and Cheng Yen also said that "although Angela is a Catholic nun and I a Buddhist one, we are of one mind and share the same goal on the path of life" (Li Wei-huang, 2002: 74). Although these two nuns were brought together for disaster relief and a religious conference, it is clear that there are more similarities between the two women than simply an urge to help. The fact that Cheng Yen reaches out to everyone, regardless of religious belief, is expressive of the fact that the Tzu Chi Foundation places charity before religious conversion. Besides her work with Sister Angela, Cheng Yen has also sent members of her organization to work with the Christian Knights in Afghanistan to bring relief to Moslem refugees. In this instance she has been quoted as saying "force cannot end the turmoil on earth, only love, gratitude, understanding, and accommodation can bring peace to the world" (Li Wei-huang, 2001: 24).

In a speech that she presented in Taiwan in 2001, Cheng Yen focused on the necessity of healing the world with love. She spoke about wanting to call out to the whole world to repent their mistakes together, to love the planet, and to care for all human beings. As Cheng Yen explains, natural disasters are terrible, but manmade catastrophes are even more horrifying: "since the 9-11 terrorist attacks in the United

States of America and many other nations, many people have not been able to live a peaceful life…how should we begin saving the earth? We should start with human hearts…with natural and manmade disasters occurring continuously, the only thing we can do is to bring peace to every heart…it is not enough for you and me just to repent. We should call upon the people of the whole world to join us in repenting the mistakes we have committed" (Cheng Yen, 2001: 72). Tzu Chi volunteers are efficient mobilizers when there is a disaster, both in order to console, and also to simply be with the victims in accordance with the concept of "caress and keep the victims company". Thus, members do more than just physically comfort and support the needy, they also touch them personally and help them spiritually by loving and caring for them (Cheng Yen, 2001: 73).

The Tzu Chi Foundation provided assistance at two locations after the terrorist attacks in the United States in 2001. Members set up tables at the New York City Family Assistance Center at Pier 94, and at the Office of Recovery and Victim Assistance Center in New Jersey. At these stations, members helped victims with their needs, including handing out emergency cash and food, providing translation services, and giving spiritual counseling. After days of service, the Tzu Chi station at Pier 94 earned the trust of people from all sectors of society, and an increasing amount of people came for help (Tzu Yang, 2001: 61). After days of service, the Red Cross staff brought a couple to the Tzu Chi Foundation who were in desperate need of help. The couple used to work as cleaners at the World Trade Center, and were now left without a means of income (they also had two children to support). The Red Cross and the Salvation Army were unable to help the couple immediately, but Tzu Chi members were able to present the couple with a US$500 cheque within minutes. Tzu Chi could give this donation to the couple without going through any complicated procedures, while other organizations needed two to three weeks in order to give money to those in need (Tzu Yang, 2001: 62). Such efforts at relief are one of the methods the Foundation uses to build bridges between their organization and the Western community. It is the hope of the members that eventually westerners will cross that bridge, joining the Foundation first as volunteers and later, with time, as Buddhists.

The Vancouver Chapter

According to Cheng Yen, the Buddha taught that religion transcends race, nationality, and geographical distance. As more and more Taiwanese have traveled abroad, they have taken the message of Tzu Chi with them. Therefore, branch offices have sprung up around the world to promote this organization's form of Buddhism – or rather, to promote the importance of charity and outreach programs. Members who have emigrated from Taiwan introduced the organization first to the local Chinese community, and then spread the message to their host community. The first Canadian chapter of the Tzu Chi Foundation was established in 1992, in Vancouver, British Columbia by Chief Executive Officer Gary Ho. I located this temple after an hour of driving through the complicated back streets of Vancouver, finally stumbling upon it without realizing what I had found. Situated in a row of apartments and businesses and sitting across from a parking lot, with its tall glass front the Tzu Chi Foundation looked more like a bank than a Buddhist temple. The other branch offices in Canada have a similar look, and are representative of the organization's secular focus. The Toronto Laison Office was established in 1994, and two more offices followed in Calgary and Mississauga (1997 and 2002, respectively) [www.tzuchi.canada, 2003]. Vancouver is the only branch office in Canada, with the other offices acting merely as a means of gathering new members and organizing small, local charity events.

Inside the building, the stoic business atmosphere continued. Lined with desks, each of which was covered with stacks of papers, computers, and phones, the 'temple' was clearly an office dedicated to the Foundations charitable activities rather than a place of worship. As one member explained to me (one of fifty women dressed in matching white and navy uniforms), the organization is more interested in helping people than in missionizing. There are currently no nuns present in Canada (although they do visit on occasion), and instead the branch is run by lay members and administrators.

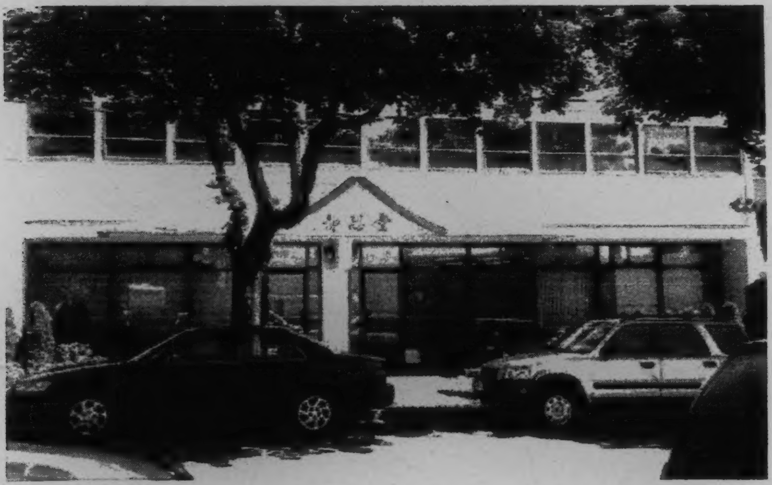

Figure 4.8: The Vancouver Chapter of the Tzu Chi Foundation

One member with whom I spoke was Florence Wong, a recent immigrant from Hong Kong. Florence explained that she was introduced to Tzu Chi nine years ago at a Tzu Chi 'tea party' in Hong Kong, where three Taiwanese members came to share their Tzu Chi stories, including how they were introduced to the organization and how it changed their lives. Florence explained that each individual came from a different background and that his or her experience with the organization had led to an ability to love, give, and be grateful. The speakers cried, and the audience cried with them. As Florence explained,

> This warm and open exchange of expressions and emotions was very touching and revealing. Later, when I participated in one of [Tzu Chi's] functions that involve over two hundred volunteers, I was amazed at the harmony and self-discipline of the volunteers. Out of curiosity and admiration, I decided to find out more about the organization and its leader…I have been a volunteer in the Canadian chapter of Tzu Chi for seven years now. During these years, I have helped in the production of publications, communications and translations, visiting the sick children and elderlies…all this while I have stayed on the Environmental Protection Team. (pers. comm., June 16, 2002).

Florence emigrated to Vancouver seven years ago. Before she came to Canada she was a teacher in Hong Kong, but since her move she has chosen to devote all her time to the Foundation and its charitable activities. Florence has two children, both of whom have graduated from local universities. Her oldest son is a member of Tzu Chi, but her husband and younger son are not. As all Tzu Chi members are encouraged to set aside a small amount of money every day to help the poor, Florence donates what she can to the organization. Florence explained to me that of the seven thousand Vancouver members most choose to support Tzu Chi by donating regularly to the Foundation. Others may choose to be more involved by volunteering in the various services and functions that are organized by the Vancouver chapter. There are currently over 900 regular volunteers in Vancouver, and these members serve in food banks, senior homes, Meals on Wheels, hospitals, and so on.

Membership Statistics in B.C.

1993	774 Members
1994	1045 Members
1995	1591 Members
1996	2283 Members
1997	3094 Members
1998	3905 Members
1999	4791 Members
2000	5911 Members
2001	6464 Members
2002	7204 Members

Figure 4.9: Vancouver Tzu Chi Membership Statistics

Source: Tzu Chi *Ten Years Review*, 2002

Florence has taken the five precepts, and she has chosen the Pure Land sect of Buddhism as her form of cultivation:

> The everyday lesson in the morning and evening will include recitation of the Amitaba Sutra, bowing to the Buddha, and chanting the name of Amitaba Buddha. The duration for each session usually lasts for one hour….as you might have understood, Buddhism is not merely a religion, it is also a philosophy and a way of life – it is the truth revealed to us by the Buddha. So serving others, helping those in need and suffering, learning to be content and grateful…is also a form of cultivation. (pers. comm., June 16, 2002).

In my conversations with her, Florence mentioned that a friend of hers had an especially moving experience when he joined the Tzu Chi Foundation. Although her friend could not meet with me while I was in Vancouver, he did agree to email the story of his experience to me. What follows is an excerpt from his email:

> As I was not an outgoing and social kind of person, I led a gloomy life when I first immigrated to Vancouver…I had a dizzy and hopeless life. When I first joined Tzu Chi, I always felt scared and nervous, especially when I had to talk in front of a group of people. I felt so embarrassed, hoping to be able to run away every minute. Thanks to the enthusiastic brothers and sisters who guided me patiently. They first gave me some small chores in the warehouse. Then I started to watch the videotapes of the Master, and began listening to the stories of Tzu Chi. Gradually, I gained confidence and was ready to participate in volunteer services….it was a tiring job…at the same time I realized how fortunate and blessed I was. I had no more complaint.
>
> In the street cleaning activity, suddenly an idea crossed my mind, if I can clean the streets for the public without asking anything for return, why can't I help in the household chores at home? After that, I always helped in the house. My wife was very happy. Our family got along much better because of this small change on my part.
>
> I know I still have a lot of problems to deal with in my life. But now I believe in what I do and do what I believe. I have found my direction of life in Tzu Chi. I will secure my every step and try my best to be a good Tzu Chi member. (Email from Johnson Huang, 2002).

It is clear from the testimonials of Florence and Johnson Huang that members of Tzu Chi are passionate about the importance of the organization in both their lives and the world.

When I originally sat down with the ten men and women who agreed to be interviewed, the first of the three meetings was awkward and stilted with most of the group simply repeating (gushing over) what I had already learned in the Tzu Chi pamphlets. Nevertheless, by the second and third interviews most of the men and women began to feel comfortable enough to add their own thoughts and opinions while answering my questions. In response to my questions about attendance nine out of ten said they volunteered at the facility at least twice a week, the tenth being an administrator who worked full time at the Vancouver office. All agreed that the mission of charity should be the focus of the organization, and all agreed that the importance of this should be passed on to their children. When I asked if one of their goals was to reach out to the non-Asian community and bring in Western converts, one young woman was quick to point out that all new members were welcome. I pressed her further and asked if their *goal* was to spread Buddhism to non-Asians in Canada and she had this to say: "the goal of the Tzu Chi Foundation is to spread Cheng Yen's missions to the world. To make the world a better place. Of course this includes non-Asians and we are happy when our membership grows. But focusing on just non-Asians is not our goal any more than focusing only on Asians is our goal." (pers. comm., anon., June 18, 2002).

In response to her comments I asked the group if they felt becoming members of the Tzu Chi Foundation also provided them with stronger ties among the Chinese/Taiwanese community in Vancouver. In response to my question the group nodded in unison, but no one seemed inclined to expand or offer personal comments. Finally, an older man explained that most members had either emigrated from Taiwan in the last ten years and were already members of the Tzu Chi Foundation, or they emigrated first, later joining family members in Vancouver who had become members upon arrival. Regardless, it is evident from both the membership statistics I have seen and the results of my interviews with this group, that most members join the organization in order to maintain or create safe ties within Vancouver's transplanted community. In fact, when I posed the question in these terms, everyone agreed and began to discuss among themselves why they joined and what opportunities they had received due to their membership. Six among the ten found jobs due to their membership and seven among the ten had convinced their preteen and teenage children to join because their friends had joined. All ten agreed that membership in the Foundation had led to experiences within the community they would not have had otherwise.

Today, the Vancouver chapter of the Tzu Chi Foundation has raised almost twelve million dollars for charity, divided between Compassion Relief work, education, cultural activities, and international relief work (www.tzuchi.canada, 2003). All funds that have been raised have been used in 100% charitable activities (a fact that members are exceedingly proud to discuss). In June 2002, members of this chapter were honored with a "Certificate of the Best of Participation", for three years of keeping the streets of Vancouver clean. Thousands of members poured into the streets every month for three years, and in doing so they removed over one hundred and ten metric tons of street waste from over two thousand city blocks. This was a project that was begun by the city of Vancouver, but it was certainly taken to another level by members of the Tzu Chi Foundation (www.tzuchi.org/global/, 2003). Just two years earlier, the Vancouver chapter helped a young blind boy who lived in Maple Ridge. Joshua O'Brien is an eighth grade student who can use his electric piano to replay any piece of music he has just heard. In 2000, the Tzu Chi Foundation began providing Joshua with enough financial assistance that he could take regular piano lessons. At the donation ceremony on October 3rd 2000, Joshua performed two pieces of music which "deeply moved the audience" (anon., 2001: 95).

On that day, the Tzu Chi Foundation donated CDN$427, 000 to ten medical institutions, educational institutions, and individuals (including Joshua). The recipients included indigent students, the Salvation Army, and hospitals (which used the money to purchase better medical equipment). Tzu Chi members in Canada have been donating CDN$100, 000 every year since 1999, in order for needy students in the Greater Vancouver region to participate in outdoor events and skills training. The fund has helped more than eight hundred students every year, and a similar donation was made to fund Buddhist lectures on university and college campuses in the area (anon., 2001: 96). Tzu Chi offices such as this follow the spirit of "receive from your local community and repay your local community", and as a consequence the money that is raised in Canada is always put to use locally.

In response to the local conditions in Canada, the format and structure of the charity work has been subsequently modified. In the early days, charity work largely focused on material assistance, but gradually the emphasis has been combined with spiritual counseling and emotional care. Besides providing emergency materials and money to needy families, volunteers also began to visit lonely seniors, sick children in hospitals, care centers for disabled people, and so on (anon., 2002: 7). By providing entertainment, massages, and food to the elderly and disabled, members hope to soothe suffering hearts and "bring light to every dark corner". Therefore, members in Vancouver have provided ten years of emergency relief, financial and material assistance to low-income families, funeral assistance for the lonely and poor, donations to charitable organization, the distribution of New Year gift money, and winter clothing to street kids (anon., 2002: 7).

A further example of volunteer efforts by Canadian Tzu Chi members are those made by students at the Tzu Chi Academy in Richmond. For instance, students collected kitchen waste for weeks and then had it transported to a Richmond farm to be buried and composted. Similarly, members are encouraged to carry reusable shopping bags and eating utensils in order to minimize the use of disposable items like plastic bags, styrofoam cups, and paper plates. Moreover, educational field trips and seminars are organized frequently, to enable members to get acquainted with local environment protection practices (anon., 2002: 16). Members of the Tzu Chi Foundation include environmental protection within their charity goals. Cheng Yen has called for environmental campaigns to 'purify lives', carry out garbage classification, reclaim resources and thus 'turn garbage into gold'. The proceeds of these programs are used for charity work to help those in need. Members in both Taiwan and Vancouver have responded enthusiastically to these campaigns by recycling reusable resources. In 1995 alone, a total of 18.3 million kilograms of paper was recovered in Taiwan – saving almost four hundred thousand trees from being felled (Shaw, 1999: 38).

When I discussed the success in Taiwan with students at the Tzu Chi Academy, many were excited to recount what their peers had accomplished. In addition, one young girl (Sarah) spoke with great enthusiasm about how important volunteering is to members of the group. "We spend more time volunteering than we do praying. I mean, it's important to make offerings to the Buddha and to our ancestors, but it's more important to change things that are going on in the world today. Our parents spend a lot of time joining in volunteer work, and they're really busy because they all have jobs. But they find time. It's how we get together as a community I guess [she shrugs and grins at her friend]. Besides, we get to spend time together when we volunteer" (pers. comm., June 20, 2002). The other young people nodded quickly in agreement. It is apparent that through its mission of charity, the Tzu Chi Foundation is doing two things: it is encouraging young people to maintain their religious tradition and thus their ethnicity, and it is providing the local community with eager hands to help wherever they are needed. What it is not doing, however, is increasing membership from the local non-

Asian community. No one in the group was able to name a recent non-Asian member, although a few remembered one or two who had come and gone over the years.

Cheng Yen has been quoted as saying, "leave footprints in this world, live values into your life". The efforts of the Tzu Chi Foundation and its Vancouver chapter have been recognized by leaders around the world, and both Florence and a member of the youth group happily handed me the *Ten Years Review* as evidence of this. In the magazine, the Vancouver chapter printed a quote from the Dalai Lama, in which he expressed gratitude and respect for the compassion shown by Cheng Yen and her followers (anon., 2002: 3). In 1996, Cheng Yen advocated the idea of community-based service. The purpose was to encourage members to extend their love and to quickly respond to local needs when disasters arose. Such service is readily enforced by members of the Vancouver chapter. In 1998, Tzu Chi Canada responded by reorganizing its volunteer structure into different regional groups based on locality. Members were encouraged to participate in the local community affairs and to look out for one another. Through various community services, the residents not only got to know each other, but they were also better equipped to care for one another when the circumstances required it (anon., 2002: 17). The spirit of love and compassion that reflects what the Tzu Chi Foundation represents is thus embedded in the community in an effort to meet Cheng Yen's goal of bringing the Pure Land to earth.

The goal of Cheng Yen is to have her followers begin with the offer of love and compassion to those around them, and then spread that love to more and more people. According to the two women that gave me a tour of the Vancouver chapter, the final goal of Master Cheng's charity relief is to help the recipients be self-sufficient in the future. As it was explained to me, Cheng Yen believes that human beings should be able to provide for themselves with dignity, rather than being dependent on handouts. Therefore, members of the Vancouver chapter do follow-up checks on recipients, and they try to encourage them to manage on their own. Furthermore, as one of the women contended: "once a member has donned the blue and white vest, they have made the commitment to serve all sentient beings with kindness, compassion, joy, and unselfish giving" (pers. comm., anon., June 18, 2002). Members see it as important to have a sincere heart, and to express genuine care for recipients so they are able to feel their love. What is seen as even more important, is that volunteers show respect for those whom they help, and in doing so make the recipients feel useful (Juan I-jong & Yuan Yao-yao, 2002: 36). This sentiment is expressed both by members individually and in the literature that is printed by the Tzu Chi Foundation.

The Vancouver chapter of the Foundation is carrying on Cheng Yen's quest to help the sick around the world. The Foundation makes donations to the University of British Columbia, the BC Children's Hospital, the Canadian Cancer Society, and so on. In addition, this chapter is also a significant supporter of the Tzu Chi Institute for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, and the Tzu Chi Marrow Donor Registry. The latter was established in 1993, and it has received nine thousand search requests every year since that time. The Tzu Chi Registry is the third largest of its kind, and between 1993 and 2000 it provided transplants to almost four hundred patients from around the world (anon., 2002: 3). The Institute for Complementary and Alternative Medicine began a clinical trial to study the effects of acupuncture on multiple sclerosis patients at the University of British Columbia Hospital in April 2000. This Institute provides complementary therapy to half of the province's cancer patients, and this number is continuing to grow. The Institute also employs two chiropractors, and provides yoga to patients through its Integrated Care Program (anon., 2002: 8). The Foundation has been exceedingly successful in its effort to combine the best of mainstream and complementary therapies through treatment plans that it tailors to meet the specific needs of its clients.[27]

Not long ago, orthodox doctors shunned alternative care programs, but slowly the medical profession has begun to ask whether alternative practitioners may have something useful to add to the medical establishment after all. According to *The Economist* (anon., 1997a: 54), the Vancouver Hospital (Canada's second-largest hospital) has gone further than the rest in making the partnership between alternative and traditional medicine official – and the Tzu Chi Foundation is at the center of this partnership. The Tzu Chi Institute for Complementary Alternative Medicine aims to scientifically sort out the useful from the useless in the welter of non-conventional therapies, and to integrate what works into conventional practice (ibid., 1997: 54). With fifteen to twenty percent of Canadians (more than twenty percent in Alberta and British Columbia) using some form of alternative medicine, it is no surprise that the Institute receives hundreds of telephone calls every day from people seeking help. In fact, the Institute had no trouble signing up four hundred volunteers for its first broad research treatment programs into pain, fatigue, and chronic illness (anon., 1997a: 54). In seeking to replace the mocking attitude that has surrounded alternative medicine with scientific method, Tzu Chi's Institute has taken an important step forward. In addition, it is clear from the medical staff that I spoke with while visiting the hospitals that the response from the medical community has been increasingly positive. While many caregivers and doctors originally looked upon Tzu Chi members as simply another round of eager volunteers, the success of the Institutes' programs and the continuous stream of volunteers to the hospitals has slowly garnered respect from the medical community.

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[27] Well aware of the need for alternative care, the Foundation offers advice to interested patients. Nevertheless, the Tzu Chi librarian (Debbie Monkman) cautions website surfers against the huge wave of information that can be found on the Internet about alternative and complementary medicine. She suggests starting at a reliable site (like Health Canada's website), and then expanding a search via listed links.

In response to the large number of request letters from hospital foundations in Canada, Tzu Chi members have worked hard to offer help. In the past ten years, the Foundation has been able to donate over $CND1.5 million to various medical institutions. These funds have enabled hospitals and care centers to sustain research, enhance patient care, and purchase life-saving medical equipment (anon., 2002: 8). According to one of the administrators I spoke with in June 2002, recipients are chosen based purely on need. As he explained, "we hold many meetings to discuss which institution or group should receive the money that our volunteers have raised. Such decisions are not based on race or religion, but on who needs our help the most. Often this means those groups who are receiving less money [than] others. Sometimes this means those groups who have many, many sick or needy. Always we research this carefully" (pers. comm., Ralph, June 20, 2002). When I contacted Ralph again in November 2003, I inquired about what requirements the recipients must meet in order to receive funds. While his answers were vague with regard to actual requirements, he did explain that the Foundation has a specific group of volunteers (many of which are accountants or bank managers) who research the legitimacy of all letters and requests that come in on a daily basis. The list of requests is long, yet members of the Tzu Chi Foundation appear to be doing everything they can to shoulder the ever-increasing demand.

In addition to such large financial contributions, Tzu Chi members in Greater Vancouver have dedicated much of their time and energy to visiting the sick in local hospitals. Members can often be found reading to patients or playing with children in the hospitals, their goal simply to bring a little happiness to the lives of the sick or dying. Between the Tzu Chi Institute and the financial and spiritual contributions made by members, the Canadian chapter has made a large step towards Cheng Yen's goal of providing medical care to all those in need, regardless of their capacity to pay. When I revisited the Vancouver chapter in August and November 2003, I was invited to join members of the group as they volunteered at local hospitals and brought food to elderly men and women who lived in the general community. What surprised me as I followed along was not the gratitude evident on the faces of those they helped, but instead the gradual realization that while all the volunteers were Chinese, many of the recipients were not.

Usually such ethnic differences would go unnoticed, but it is interesting in this situation because roughly a third of those we visited were Christian. Crosses and bibles were evident in both hospital rooms and apartments, yet members of the Foundation paid no heed. Instead, they sat with the men and women at the hospital, listening to their stories or relating their own anecdotes, none of which included information about Buddhism or the Foundation itself. Similarly, when food was delivered to the litany of elderly members in the community, no mention of the Tzu Chi Foundation was made unless Buddhism was brought up by one of the recipients. Consequently, for the most part it appears that members of the Vancouver chapter are interested in helping members of the community, rather than assimilating or recruiting Western converts. Services were provided to both Asians and non-Asians, and more than one volunteer told me that nothing was expected in return. According to one of the women I accompanied, all they hope to gain was the knowledge that they helped someone through a difficult time. Nevertheless, when I inquired further about Cheng Yen's plans to modernize Buddhism and increase Western membership, one young man pulled me aside to confide in me. "It is true that we expect nothing in return when we help these people. But it is also true that like Master Cheng Yen, we hope to bring more people into the Foundation. It is our hope that if we offer our services with kindness and honesty, people will one day ask about Buddhism and Tzu Chi. We try to make the religion easy to understand, but we don't push it on anyone. If they ask, then we answer [he shrugs]. Either way we help" (pers. comm., anon., Nov. 14, 2003).

Along with this mission of medicine, Cheng Yen's mission of education is being carried out by local members. In Vancouver, the Tzu Chi Foundation established a bursary fund for students in need. The fund was established to foster talented people who will make special contributions within the local society, as well as to assist the needy children who will now be able to participate in a wide range of cultural, social, and athletic opportunities. In 1993, bursaries were awarded to first year students at the University of British Columbia, and in 1995 contributions to the endowment fund of Douglas College Foundation, offering support to students for their pursuit of educational goals (anon., 2002: 10). Since that time, bursaries have been offered through the Vancouver School Board to aid students who needed additional financial assistance to participate in extra-curricular activities. In 1999, the bursary fund was increased and the territory was extended to cover six other school districts in Greater Vancouver (anon., 2002: 10).

As Florence explained to me, "education is the essence of purifying human minds and has always been emphasized by Master Cheng Yen" (pers. comm., Nov. 14, 2003). Thus, with an objective of bringing out the "good consciousness" of young people, the Tzu Chi Collegiate Youth Association was established. By involving young people in various types of social services and training camps, it is hoped that the younger generation will follow the "historical steps of Tzu Chi". When I sat down in June to speak with members of the youth group, two young women instantly took charge of the group.[28] Perhaps it is due to their hours of volunteer work or their strong belief in the Tzu Chi Foundation, but Emma and Alice had a confidence that belied their age. Whatever the reason, it was a pleasure to interview these two polite, intelligent girls as other students came and went, offering their opinions and answering questions now and then. The girls explained that there are currently fifty members in the youth group (with a range in age from 15 to 23), and that there are both male and female members, all of whom are Asian.

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[28] This group of young people contained a few of the members of the Richmond Academy that I spoke to earlier. Members came and went as we spoke, each with their own itinerary or tasks to perform in the community center. It was Emma and Alice in particular who stayed to answer my questions.

Emma is seventeen, and when I spoke to her she was just finishing high school. Her friend Alice is sixteen, and would now be in her final year of high school. Both girls became members of the Tzu Chi Foundation a few years earlier, because their mothers were members (and both were a little embarrassed to tell me that they had joined "against their will"). Apparently a few members of the Youth Group are Christian (Emma and Alice are both Buddhist), but joined the Group because of its charitable activities. The Group meets twice a month in order to organize fundraising, charity events, and social activities (such as dances, where the money they raise from ticket sales is donated to the Tzu Chi Foundation). Some of the members are more dedicated then others, of course, but all offer what little extra time they have. Nevertheless, Emma mentioned that quite a few members of the Youth Group attend meetings only when there is something specific planned. She also explained that some of the members are recipients of the bursary fund, and joined because they wanted to return the help that the Foundation had bestowed on them.

Many of the events that are planned by the Youth Group are geared towards protecting the environment and volunteering at local hospitals. Alice and Emma told me that their group has organized bottle drives, street cleaning, picking up garbage at local parks, reading to seniors, bringing pets to visit hospital patients, and fund-raisers such as car washes and dog walking. Included in this list is the development of the Environmental Protection Team, which promotes environmental consciousness among members. Since the Youth Group began, there has been a gradual increase in members (from twenty in 1995 to the fifty that they have today), and Alice explained that they have been trying to encourage non-Asian youth to join as well. Their success in this has been limited thus far, and while they have had the odd non-Asian member in the past there has never been more than one or two at any given time. According to the girls, many teenagers they speak with are interested in joining a "Buddhist" group, but then grow bored when they understand how much work is involved in membership. Yet others are turned off by the thought of becoming Buddhist (which is often a perceived requirement).

Either way, the outreach to non-Asians has been unsuccessful over the last eight years. The Tzu Chi Foundation has express plans to adapt its practices in the West in order to bring in new members and more volunteers through the use of their outreach programs. The results after ten years of effort, however, have been an increase in Asian membership and an increase in charitable work, but no significant increase in non-Asian membership. Yet Chinese membership within the Foundation is continuously growing and providing opportunities for the families of immigrants and converts. Rather than increasing Western membership while modernizing Buddhist practices, Cheng Yen's plan seems to have adjusted to become one of building bridges between communities. The Foundation has become a means for the local Asian community to support one another, even as they are volunteering throughout the larger Western community.

In order to continue reaching out to the local community, the Vancouver chapter is continuing Cheng Yen's mission of culture. In 1998 an Internet site was established for Canadian development of the Foundation (www.tzuchi.canada). According to the students at the Richmond Academy, the site has had a gradual increase in hits over the last four years. The students at the Academy have taken charge of developing the website, and they are constantly updating and evaluating the information that is presented. In addition to the Internet site, in 1996 a bi-monthly magazine called *Tzu Chi Canada* was developed for both members and the general public. The goal of the website and the magazine is to allow Canadians to keep in touch with the Canadian Tzu Chi Chapter's development and activities (anon., 2002: 13). According to the men and women I spoke with during my third interview session, the results of these cultural efforts are difficult to establish. There is no way to document if it is members or non-members (or Asians or non-Asians) that are logging on to the website, nor is there any record of who is picking up copies of *Tzu Chi Canada*. About half of the members I spoke with believed that the mission of culture was just as important as the other missions, because to them, this was the "best way to get young people and Westerners interested" (pers. comm., anon. June 21, 2002). The other half of the members strongly believed that reaching out to Westerners should be the last of the Foundation's motives. To these members, the missions of charity and education are more in line with the Buddhist philosophy.

In fact, members of the Tzu Chi Foundation volunteer around the world, offering relief to all those who are in need. Along with aid in Taiwan, China, Africa, and the United States, Tzu Chi members in Canada have been recognized for both local and international relief work. For instance, the Canadian branch received a community service award for their efforts at providing relief where it is most needed at the time. Jenny Moss of the Canadian Red Cross visited the Tzu Chi Canada branch office in Vancouver in January 2002, in order to present the Community Service Award for the long-term services of Tzu Chi volunteers (anon., 2002: 95). One of the efforts that members were being honored for was their help in November 2000, when a group of tourists from Taiwan were involved in a major car accident in British Columbia. Tzu Chi volunteers immediately went to the five hospitals where the injured tourists were being cared for and offered their services. The volunteers also helped the victims' families with the funeral arrangements that had to be made (anon., 2002: 95). Therefore, whether it is large projects such as helping citizens of another country after a natural disaster, or smaller relief work within the local community, Tzu Chi members are dedicated to providing relief wherever it is needed.

It is important to note as well, that Master Cheng always encourages new immigrants to 'love' and adapt to their new homes while using the country's social resources. Despite the fact that members need to make an extra effort to learn the language and adapt to the new culture, they are encouraged to perform services for the people who are in need in their new homeland. This translates to thousands of new volunteers in Canada, volunteers not just within the Chinese community, but among all communities in need. Cheng Yen believes that there should not be any linguistic or cultural barriers between people, and she is clearly committed to broadening her organization's services within communities around the world. The mission of the Tzu Chi Foundation is "to create a better world by helping the needy, and enlightening the rich" (Shaw, 1999: 30). This mission is carried out through their ninety-three offices in twenty-five countries. 100% of the members and administrators that I spoke with agreed that the main goals of the Tzu Chi Foundation should be to both encourage the practice of

Buddhism in daily life, and to help others by providing compassionate volunteer service and relief work. Such goals are undertaken in order to bring bodhisattvas into this world, and the result thus far has been increased Asian membership, an increase in volunteers, and slight changes to traditional Buddhist policies. As one of Cheng Yen's followers explained to me in Vancouver, "Buddhism is a philosophy, this is real-life practice" (pers. comm., Florence, June 18, 2002).

The Calgary Liaison Office

Although the Calgary office is small, the founders are trying to follow the guidelines that Cheng Yen set out for her followers. Because it is simply a liaison office rather than a branch of the Foundation, the Calgary organization is based out of the home of two Tzu Chi members – a mother and daughter. Marissa welcomed me into her home, and with some hesitancy agreed to tell me about why she joined Tzu Chi, and how she and her mother had gathered the fifty members necessary to establish a liaison office. Marissa, her brother, and her parents immigrated to Canada twelve years ago from Taiwan, where her mother was a committee member of the Tzu Chi Foundation. When Marissa was ten she attended a ceremony at the Still Thoughts Abode with her mother, and she had the opportunity to meet Cheng Yen. Unfortunately, as Marissa explained to me with some embarrassment, she was curled up in the hall asleep when she met the Venerable Master. The prayer service was at 3:00am, and Marissa had fallen asleep. When Marissa awoke to see Cheng Yen standing over her, telling her it was too cold to sleep on the floor, Marissa (not knowing who she was) simply shrugged her shoulders and ignored her. When she visited Cheng Yen in Taiwan last year, Marissa said that she and the Venerable Master had a good laugh over the little grumpy girl asleep on the cold floor.

When Marissa and her family moved to Canada, they settled in Vancouver for the first few years, and Marissa became a member of the Vancouver Youth Group. When she came to Calgary, she tried to set up a Youth Group but most members who joined simply drifted away after a few months. The fifty Tzu Chi members that she and her mother have since gathered meet at their home every two weeks to discuss the volunteer work or fund-raising activities that they have planned. Some members of the group also gather on the first and fifteenth of every month for prayer and chanting, as well as on the anniversary of the Taiwanese earthquake (September 21, 1999) and the Buddha's birthday. Marissa explained that the expectancy and work involved in being a member of the Tzu Chi Foundation is so high that it is difficult to attract and keep members. Not many people have the desire to dedicate a significant portion of their time to volunteer work. Nevertheless, the two women have managed to keep a membership base of fifty, and recently someone offered them office space in downtown Calgary so they could move meetings from their home.[29]

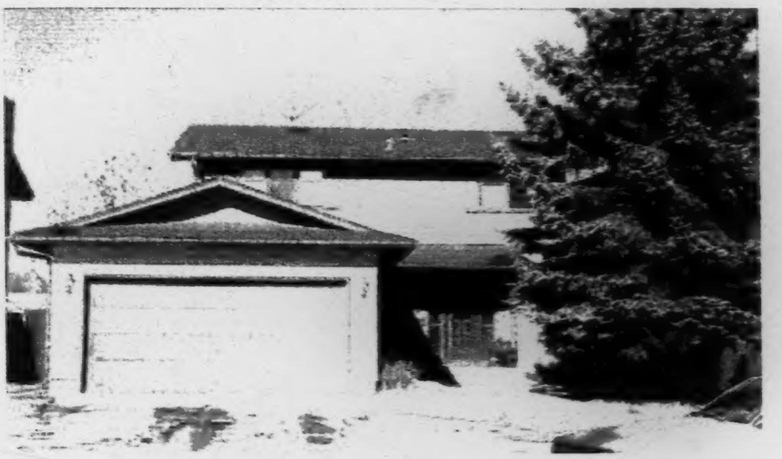

Figure 4.10: The Tzu Chi Calgary Liaison Office

Like most Tzu Chi offices, the Calgary office collects donations from its members. However, as Marissa explained, their group focuses more on fund-raising than personal donations. She told me that personal donations are difficult to track, and since many people in Calgary are still unfamiliar with the organization they are often unwilling to offer donations – although members do set aside their required CND$0.50 a day. When I asked Marissa if she had any plans to expand her group to Edmonton, she told me that they had tried to start a liaison office in Edmonton but were unable to garner enough interest. Since early 2004, however, membership in Edmonton has increased to sixty-five members, with funding and donations still channeled through Vancouver. Within their original membership base, Marissa's group included a few Christian members. In fact, her father and brother are Roman Catholic and yet they continue to help Marissa with fund-raising and charity events. Consequently, according to Marissa, a focus on university campuses where there is already a strong Christian base interested in charity work is often helpful in gaining new members for the Tzu Chi Foundation. While a few members of the Calgary group meet for morning and evening prayers, they do not discuss politics as a group because it "causes too much conflict" (pers. comm., Marissa, Oct. 6, 2002). As with other Tzu Chi offices and chapters, the goal of the Calgary members is to first heal the suffering in the world through charity, and through these volunteer services spread the Buddhist dharma, thus gaining new followers.

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[29] When I returned to visit Marissa in November 2003 the group was still holding services out of her home. The office space that they had been promised had fallen through and Marissa and her mother were looking for another option.

When I came back to Calgary in November 2002, a month after my first visit, Marissa had arranged for me to meet four other local members at the University of Calgary campus. The four young women were eager to speak with me, as each had joined the Tzu Chi Foundation recently and were excited to discuss their involvement. Their comments offered a useful comparison to both Marissa's and those in the Vancouver Foundation. After introducing myself and telling the girls about my research I asked each of them to tell me their own background and why they had joined the Tzu Chi Foundation. I was expecting their answers to be slightly different from those of Florence and the other eighteen members I interviewed in Vancouver. These girls were not only new members, but there were other important differences as well. I learned that all four girls were in their first year of university, two in nursing and two in education. All four were between the ages of seventeen and nineteen, and were the first in their family to join the Tzu Chi Foundation. The girls were second generation Canadians, their families originating from Taiwan, China, and Malaysia. Three of the four girls had parents who were long time Buddhists, but not members of this specific organization. The third girl (Sarina) came from a Roman Catholic household.

Sarina began our conversation by discussing her large family and how her brothers and sisters felt about her joining a Buddhist group: "My family didn't really care [she smiled broadly at her friends]. I started by telling them all about the charity work that the Tzu Chi Foundation promotes, and my mom had already heard of Cheng Yen.

My family's from Taiwan and given all the good work the group has done, well, they certainly couldn't complain. They were just happy I had not gone out and joined the Falungong cult!" (pers. comm., Nov. 22, 2002). The other girls had similar accounts of familial reactions, each having a parent or a friend who knew someone who had done volunteer work for the liaison office in the past. Two of the girls joined the Foundation because of genuine interest in Buddhism and charity work, Sarina being one of them. Another girl, Maria, joined because her boyfriend was already a member and had encouraged her to join so they could spend time together. The final girl, Manda, joined because she believed the charity work would help her get work in nursing in the future. Manda had an uncle in Vancouver who was not a member of Tzu Chi himself, but had told her stories about how helpful it is to be a member of the Tzu Chi Foundation when looking for employment.

None of the girls joined the Foundation in order to bring Buddhism to Westerners, and they were a little surprised by the idea. I pointed out that one of Cheng Yen's goals is to open Buddhism to the world, spreading the religion through tireless efforts of charity, medicine, education, relief work, and the modernization of Buddhist philosophy. The girls looked a little embarrassed and explained that since they were new to the Foundation they weren't familiar with all of Cheng Yen's teachings. Sarina suggested that such a plan would naturally happen if they continued volunteering in the community. The other three agreed. "Sure, that's right. I mean, when I become a nurse I could work here or in Edmonton and I could teach people about Buddhism and the Tzu Chi Foundation whenever I'm volunteering!" (pers. comm., Manda, Nov. 22, 2002). All four girls agreed that right now the Calgary office is being used more as a means of socializing with friends and celebrating the odd Buddhist occasion, rather than reaching out to non-members. The girls simply hoped that membership numbers would continue to increase so that Alberta would eventually have a Chapter of its own.

When I returned to Calgary in November 2003, I thought it would be useful to sit in on a meeting. I was interested to see if there had been any changes in membership in a year, and if the group had become more organized. In 2002, it was clear that the liaison office was still in its earliest phases, the members unable to organize even small-scale missions like their peers in Vancouver. The meeting was in Marissa's house once again, the group gathering tightly together in her small basement. Three of the girls that I had met the year before were present, although I learned that Sarina had drifted away from the group after a few months. By the time the meeting began, it was clear that little had changed since my previous visits. Including Marissa, her mother, and the three girls, there were less than twenty people present.[30] The meeting consisted of little more than a group of friends socializing and discussing recent events. Now and then someone read something out of Cheng Yen's writings, or a member would mention something the Foundation had accomplished in Taiwan. For the most part, however, the members spoke about school, home-life, or work, before settling down to eat the snacks that Marissa's mother had provided. It was clear from this evening that some of the meetings of the Foundation are used more as a means of maintaining friendships and reinforcing ethnic solidarity, than as a means of bringing Buddhism to the West.

Discussion

Chien-yu Julia Huang and Robert P. Weller (1998: 380) have argued that in some ways, the Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation is simply the latest reincarnation of a long line of popularizing Buddhist movements in China. Like those movements, this organization has a charismatic leader who offers a worldly version of Buddhism, allowing people to pursue religious ideals without leaving their families and joining monastic orders. However, in some ways it is also quite new, specifically in Cheng Yen's transformation of the bodhisattva ideal into her goal of compassion and charity. The Still Thoughts Abode in Hualien remains the center of the Tzu Chi movement, since the axis of the Foundation is Cheng Yen and the temple is her home. The Tzu Chi mission has always emphasized pragmatic action in the world, and visitors to Still Thoughts can still see middle-aged women sitting, talking, and making handicrafts. Unlike most Buddhist movements in Taiwan or China, these members spend little time reciting sutras or chanting the name of Amitabha Buddha. And, unlike traditional Buddhist organizations, Cheng Yen does not encourage monastic life as a means of achieving enlightenment (Huang & Weller, 1998: 381).

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[30] When I asked Marissa if this was the usual size of a meeting, she said that while there were still just over fifty members in Calgary, they rarely had more than fifteen or twenty members gathered at one time.

The Tzu Chi goal of building a Pure Land on earth has been undertaken by four million citizens around the world with vigor and commitment, regardless of its lack of success in recruiting non-Asian members. Cheng Yen's combined emphasis on action over philosophy, her extension of maternal love beyond the family, and her support for the lives of her followers make her Foundation especially appealing to women, something that was evident in my own research and the interviewees who were 85% female. Tzu Chi's success in the 1980s was partially based on the large numbers of women that flocked to the organization because of the extra time and money they had to devote to charitable activities (Huang & Weller, 1998: 386). In Canada it seems that Asian women are still flocking to the Foundation in order to give their time over to volunteer efforts, and (just as often) to socialize with their friends. Perhaps it is because of its large female following that the Tzu Chi Foundation is the largest civil organization in Taiwan, and one of the largest Buddhist organizations worldwide. Or, on the other hand, perhaps it is because of the commitment of Cheng Yen and the success of her follower's charitable, medical, educational, cultural, and relief work that has spread information about the organization and encouraged more and more people to donate their time and money.

The Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation is a modern Buddhist organization, and as such it holds no doctrinal position over or against Chinese Buddhism as a whole. Cheng Yen does not point towards one school of Buddhism in particular as being correct, nor does she encourage members to follow only her teachings or those of Humanistic Buddhism. The Foundation places its emphasis on charitable giving (one of the traditional Six Perfections of Mahayana Buddhism) as the key to religious life. In addition, Cheng Yen and her followers promote the Confucian conception of individual morality as the foundation of a good society. Nevertheless, in order to promote their beliefs and practices, Tzu Chi has made modifications in religious practice in order to meet the needs of Buddhist lay people in contemporary society. For example, the Five Precepts (not to kill, steal, engage in sexual immorality, lie, or use intoxicants) have been combined with an additional set of precepts.[31] Similarly, while Cheng Yen has offered her followers a standardized set of Buddhist practices (correct forms of greeting, prostrations, and eating a meal) no form of continued Buddhist practice is required from her followers. In an effort to bring Buddhism to communities around the world, Cheng Yen has adapted the Buddhist philosophy so that it is broad enough to include all people, regardless of religious belief. This is evident in Canada with Sarina, the Roman Catholic member, and the Christians who received volunteer services from the Foundation in Vancouver.

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[31] The additional precepts Cheng Yen has added are: no gambling or speculation, follow the traffic rules, be moderate in speech and attitude and respect your parents, and no participation in politics or demonstrations.

As Jones (1999: 214) correctly asserts, Cheng Yen takes social work as both metaphor and method to reinterpret traditional Buddhist teachings, and thus prescribes new practices that are suited to contemporary lay society. In order to emphasize that hers is a path of practical action (rather than study or meditation), Cheng Yen points out that the scriptures of Buddhism embody The Way (*dao*), and The Way is a road that must be trodden. In other words, wisdom is not to be found through study and meditation, but by realizing the nonduality of the donor and the recipient in the transactions of charity. Thus, Cheng Yen consciously adapted the traditional Buddhist precepts to suit the needs of modern communities around the world. Moreover, unlike many religious-based organizations, the Tzu Chi Foundation is one that focuses on helping the needy first and studying Buddhist scriptures second. Cheng Yen has created a Buddhist organization that has adapted itself to the needs of the modern world, and in doing so used the powers of globalization to her benefit. Beginning with only a handful of women in Taiwan, the Tzu Chi Foundation has moved around the globe and garnered over four million members based on its charitable help and its religious adaptations. Nevertheless, as I have demonstrated through my research, Cheng Yen's goals have only been partially realized. In Canada the Tzu Chi Foundation is being used as a means to solidify ethnic identity and provide opportunities for local members, while as of yet there has been little increase in non-Asian membership.

Case Study Two: The Buddha's Light International Association

Fo Guang Shan was founded in 1967 by Venerable Hsing Yun, a charismatic monk of exceptional distinction and popularity. It was under his leadership that a single temple in Taiwan developed into a worldwide network of sub-temples, foundations, social welfare agencies, and various other organizations. In addition to the original temple, Fo Guang Shan has established various sub-temples both throughout Taiwan and in numerous other countries around the world. According to the Buddha's Light International Association's *Ten Years Review*, there are currently over one hundred branches of the organization worldwide, twenty of which are in Taiwan. Other major centers which house branches of Fo Guang Shan are Japan, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Republic of South Africa, Brazil, India, the United States, Canada, Germany, and France among others. In 1990, Hsing Yun unified his followers and organized them into a single, large-scale, nation-wide body: the Buddha's Light International Association (anon., 2002: 1). Chapters arose quickly in all the countries where there was a Fo Guang Shan branch, and new branches sprung up in Holland, Thailand, and Singapore. As Jones (1999: 191) states in his brief analysis of BLIA, this group has two distinct aspects: the rationalization and standardization of Buddhist life and practice, and the articulation of the religious beliefs and values that inspire this life and are enacted by these practices. This is very different from the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China (BAROC), which is an umbrella organization that provides government liaison and other services for its members, but does not provide the level of standardization that Hsing Yun's organization does.

Fo Guang Shan is similar to the Tzu Chi Foundation in that it is a religious order based on the thought and charisma of a single leader. In this case, the charismatic leader is Venerable Master Hsing Yun. Over the last few decades Hsing Yun has created a set of principles for producing a form of Buddhism that has the ability to operate within the modern, global world. Like Cheng Yen, he urges his nuns and monks to become active within the community, and to pursue training in service occupations like medicine and teaching. As Hsing Yun sees it, liberation from samsara must be considered a long-term goal that can be best achieved through committed study and practice of Buddhist texts. Thus, while like Cheng Yen, Hsing Yun places significant emphasis on the use of Buddhism in daily life, he further emphasizes the importance of the study of specific Buddhist literature.[32] Hsing Yun stresses that his followers' immediate goal should be to develop the virtues of compassion and morality, coupling this with the emphasis on the living world (rather than the usual focus of Chinese Buddhism on transcendence and future lives). As Jones (1999: 197) explains, this is a direct effort to reorient Chinese Buddhism. While this is true, members of BLIA do consider themselves to be *Chinese* Buddhists. Most note that the only difference between 'Chinese' and 'Taiwanese' Buddhism is that their focus is on bringing the Pure Land to earth, rather than trying to reach the Pure Land through the reciting of Amitabha Buddha's name.

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[32] Hsing Yun's texts are the main focus of study for BLIA members. For a complete list of his texts see Appendix Two.

The Founder

Hsing Yun left his family in 1937 at the age of eleven, and went to study under Zhikai of the Dajue Temple on Qixia Mountain (a well-known, notable Buddhist site).[33] In 1939, Hsing Yun took the tonsure under Venerable Master Chih K'ai at Ch'hsia Temple and later became a disciple of the 48th generation of the Lin-chi division in Ch'an Buddhism. He received the five precepts in 1941 (at age fifteen), and was thus ordained at the Ch'hsia Temple in China (Fu Chi-ying, 1996: 483). Hsing Yun remained to study the Qixia Vinaya School (*Qixia Luxue Yuan*), before completing his courses at the Jiaoshan Buddhist Studies Institute (*Jiaoshan Foxue Yuan*) [Jones, 1999: 186]. In 1947, Hsing Yun became the principal of White Pagoda Elementary School and founded a monthly magazine *Raging Billows* with Master Chih Yung (just a few months later Hsing Yun was arrested by the communists for his participation in religious events). A year later, Master Hsing Yun became director of Hua-tsang Temple in Nanjing, where he edited *Splendid Light*, a supplement of the newspaper *Hsu Pao* (Fu Chi-ying, 1996: 484).

Hsing Yun arrived in Keelung, Taiwan, with a monastic relief group in 1949, and was subsequently arrested with Master Tz'u Hang and others on allegations of subversive activities, which result in his twenty-three day incarceration. In 1950, he took shelter at Yuan-kuang Temple in Chungli under Master Miao Kuo, later standing guard in the mountains around Fa-yun Temple in Maioli where he authored his first work, *Singing in Silence*. Hsing Yun later took charge of the academic affairs in a Buddhist seminar, where he learned Japanese. In 1952, he was elected an executive of the Chinese Buddhist Association, and with the help of his title began to raise funds for emergency relief for the recent flood in Hualien (Fu Chi-ying, 1996: 484). In 1954, Hsing Yun was stationed at Lei-yin Temple and soon began preaching in rural areas and prisons. He continued to preach around Taiwan while promoting and organizing the reprint of the Buddhist Canon. By 1956, Hsing Yun had built a lecture hall for chanting, founded the first kindergarten, tutored in arts and sciences, and continued his preaching in local prisons. Strictly speaking, Hsing Yun never spent a single day in regular school, nor did he earn a graduation diploma (a multitude of which he has handed out through the years). Similarly, while he has never attended university himself, Hsing Yun founded both the Hsi Lai and Fo Guang Shan universities (in Los Angeles and Taiwan respectively) and has since been awarded an honorary doctorate degree from Hsi Lai University (Fu Chi-ying, 1996: 20).

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[33] As with many religious figures, there are mythical tales surrounding the birth of Hsing Yun – tales that his followers perpetuate but that he puts little stock in himself. For instance, his mother tells the story of a dream that she had while pregnant with Hsing Yun: "in labor with your master, I had a dream of a little golden figure. He was rummaging through the odds and ends by my bed, not uttering a sound…looking for a stalk of rice…which he finally pulled from under my bed". *Tao*, rice, is a pun for *tao*, the way. More unusual happenings were said to ensue after Hsing Yun's birth. The chubby newborn was rosy-cheeked on one side and quite pale on the other. Between his nose and upper lip a pair of fine reddish lines were visible. Neighbors were soon gossiping about the "little monster who was born into the home of Li Ch'eng-pao". Not to cause further uproar among the villagers, his mother would have him leashed with a piece of string and kept indoor most of the time until, fortunately, these unusual birthmarks vanished by age two or three (Fu Chi-ying, 1996: 11).

Hsing Yun has since moved beyond his original goals of local education in Taiwan, dedicating the remaining years of his life to the modernization and globalization of Buddhism. With this goal in mind, one of the more consequential needs that Hsing Yun turned his attention to was the lack of adequate textbooks on Buddhism. Today, Fo Guang Shan provides over twenty libraries for its international department, the lay community, students, and children. These facilities can be traced to the causes and conditions that first bonded Hsing Yun to a library over fifty years ago. During his early years as a monk Hsing Yun discovered the joy of books, and every cent he collected was spent on books. In fact, according to his biographer, Hsing Yun would miss a meal rather than miss a book (Fu Chi-ying, 1996: 47). Hsing Yun declares in his own writings that while Buddhist texts have been assembled by a number of Buddhist organizations over the years, few are widely valued in the Buddhist community (Hsing Yun, 2000b: i). In 1990, Hsing Yun made a vow to put together a set of textbooks that would total one hundred thousand words. After combining the works of eminent Buddhist elders and the theories of various Buddhist schools, however, his first draft amounted to almost three million words. When this work was first published, the textbooks (simply entitled *Buddhism*) served as lecture and reference material for members of BLIA and disciples of Fo Guang Shan. The collection did not go beyond the organization.

The Organization

Since Fo Guang Shan Temple was first established by Hsing Yun in 1967, it has evolved from a mountain-top bamboo forest temple to the largest Buddhist monastery in Taiwan and an internationally recognized pilgrimage site. This astounding growth includes numerous affiliated institutions, including four universities, thirteen colleges, twenty-two libraries, five kindergartens, and eight art galleries (anon., n.d.#1: 1). Included on the grounds of the Monastery is the Pilgrim's Lodge, which offers the modern accommodations of a dining hall and one thousand guest rooms. The lodge was built especially for the convenience of devotees and tourists traveling from around the world. The Monastery also houses the Pure Land Cave, which has vivid, life-like statues and paintings that depict the traditional Western Paradise as described in the *Amitabha Sutra*, and the Buddhist Cultural Museum, which has a rich collection of ancient and contemporary Buddhist art (anon., n.d.#1: 2). Members of Fo Guang Shan Temple and BLIA view the cave and museum as a means of enhancing the knowledge of the Buddha's life through the understanding of Buddhist history, geography, relics, and so on. Consequently, also located on the Temple grounds is the Great Buddha Land, which has an Amitabha Buddha statue that stands one hundred twenty feet tall and is surrounded by four hundred eight smaller statues of Amitabha Buddha.

The Devotee's House is dedicated to the honor of the devotees who have provided support for Fo Guang Shan, and it thus consists of eight reception rooms, an eight hundred-seat dining hall, and a twelve hundred-seat auditorium. The Great Hero Hall, which is housed nearby, enshrines three "majestic" Buddha statues of Sakyamuni, Amitabha, and Bhaisajya-guru (there are also 14,800 statues of Sakyamuni Buddha around the walls) [anon., n.d.#1: 2]. The Great Mercy Hall is dedicated to Avlokitesvara Bodhisattva (Guan Yin), who reaches out for the salvation of all sentient beings with great compassion. Fo Guang Shan Monastery also houses a seven-story, fifty thousand niche funeral complex, in which two thousand spots are reserved for destitute individuals (the constant peaceful chanting offers spiritual solace for the deceased and their families). Traveling deeper into the Temple grounds one finds the Tathagatha Building, which includes the Cultural Exhibition Center, Central Offices, Meditation Hall, and the two thousand-seat auditorium (beside which one finds the Gold and Jade Buddhist buildings). In order to promote Buddhist cultural traditions and teachings, the Fo Guang Shan Foundation for Buddhist Culture and Education hosts a number of domestic and international academic conferences, as well as providing worldwide Buddhist examinations (anon., n.d.#1: 3).[34]

Like Cheng Yen's Still Thoughts Abode in Hualien, Hsing Yun's temple facilities house a large range of activities, including a Buddhist Studies Institute. Courses are offered in Chinese, Japanese, and English, as well as in flower arranging, martial arts, vegetarian cooking, calligraphy, and traditional Buddhist subjects. The temple also houses a high school, a public library, bookstores and gift shops, conference facilities, and both audiovisual and multimedia facilities. Fo Guang Shan Publishing House sponsors the regular publication of the periodicals *Awakening the World, Universal Door*, and an ever-increasing series of Buddhist books, audiocassettes, and videotapes. The Tripitaka Compilation Department has issued a sixteen-volume *Agama Sutra*, an eight-volume *Foguang Buddhist Encyclopedia*, and a fifty-one-volume *Ch'an Collection* (all of which are currently being translated into English, and will thus be available for world-wide English distribution within the next five years) [anon., n.d.#1: 4].

In order to meet Hsing Yun's ideal of benefiting society through the fostering of both religious and secular talents, Fo Guang Shan sponsors an educational system with two main streams: monastic education and secular education. The former includes the Chinese Buddhist Research Institute, Fo Guang Shan Tsung Lin University, East Buddhist College, and the Advanced Study Department. Students from various parts of the world enjoy free tuition and room and board, and graduates are offered a wide range of choices – including further study abroad, teaching posts, or service at branch temples. The secular education includes the affiliated kindergartens, Pumen High School, adult education at the Urban Buddhist Study Class, Devotees' Seminars, the Short-term

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[34] For examples of these examinations, please see Appendix Four.

Novitiate Program, and Buddhist summer and winter camps for teachers and college students (anon., n.d.#1: 4). Triple Platform Ordination ceremonies have been held five times since the Temple's inception in order to prepare candidates both physically and mentally for membership in the Buddhist order, and to enhance their mastery of morality, meditation, and wisdom.

The Fo Guang Shan Compassion Foundation assists the poor, sick, and homeless by providing free medical care at the main monastery, and by dispatching mobile clinics to remote villages. The Foundation also distributes clothing, food, and supplies to the rural poor through an annual relief campaign (while also encouraging the release of captured living creatures and advocating human organ donations). Hsing Yun has commented in the past that Fo Guang Shan has the facilities to take care of the needs of humans from birth to old age, in sickness and in death, and it is evident from these examples that his statement is correct. In addition, the facilities further include the Tatzu Children's Home, which was established to help needy and orphaned children from Taiwan and other countries. The volunteers at the Children's Home place importance on nurturing constructive thought, self-esteem, and positive appreciation, while playing an important role in the daily up-bringing of these children (anon., n.d.#1: 5). Similarly, the Fo Guang Shan Retirement Home was established in order to provide a peaceful and quiet environment for retired devotees, and the Lan Yang Senior Citizens Home has given shelter to more than eight hundred chronically ill and destitute seniors who are over the age of seventy (anon., n.d.#1: 5).

In a "sense of gratitude towards the Buddha, their country, their parents, and all living beings", the resident monastics and lay devotees arise at 4:30am daily in order to conduct the morning services of chanting and prostrations. All visitors and tourists to the temple are welcome to join these services (anon., n.d.#1: 6). Similarly, one, three, and seven-day retreats are held frequently at the mediation centers that are affiliated with Fo Guang Shan in Taiwan. Monastics, laity, members of the community, and tourists are always welcome to attend. Throughout the year there are also regularly scheduled and special incantation ceremonies, which included (but which are not limited to) services involving Amitabha, Bhaisajya-guru, and Shakyamuni's birthdays, the Great Compassion Chanting, and the Peaceful Lantern Festival. The programs of sutra recitation and lectures that are associated with such ceremonies have been developed in order to assist those attending in "the diligent practice of Buddhism, the cultivation of self-composed attitude, the roots of benevolence, and the generosity of wisdom" (anon., n.d.#1: 6).

In this regard, there are often pilgrimages organized to Fo Guang Shan from countries around the world. During such visits, devotees participate in dharma lectures and classes on Buddhism in the hope of effecting an inner spiritual transformation. In order to continue and encourage the spread of the dharma through Fo Guang Shan Buddhism, affiliated temples have been established throughout the world. It is important to note that while Fo Guang Shan is the original monastery and organization founded by Hsing Yun and his followers, it is only one of many associations under the all-inclusive title of the Buddha's Light International Association. While the Fo Guang Shan Monastery has been established as a refuge, which both members and non-members are encouraged to visit, the sub-organizations created by Hsing Yun are intended to deliver the Buddhist dharma to communities around the world. Hsing Yun established BLIA in order to further his aim of globalizing Chinese Buddhism, thus bringing his organization and his philosophies to potential followers who are beyond the borders of Taiwan and the Fo Guang Shan Monastery.

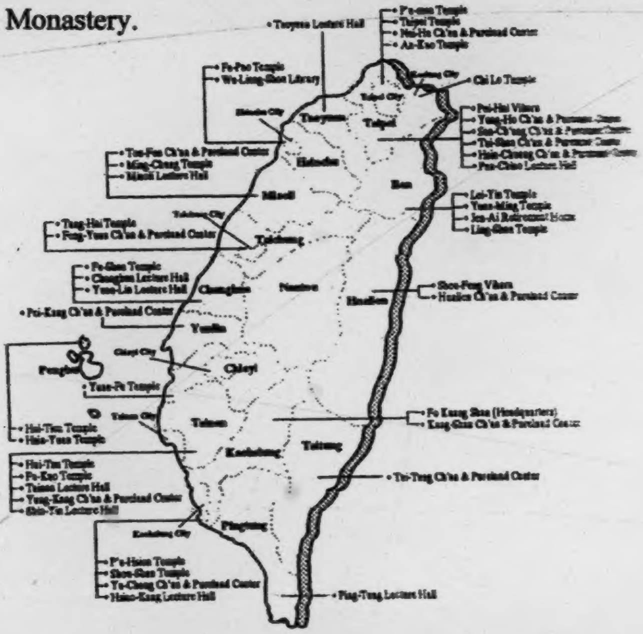
Taoyuan Lecture Hall
P'u-men Temple
Taipei Temple
Nei-Hu Ch'an & Pureland Center
An-Kuo Temple
Fo-Pao Temple
Wu-Liang-Shou Library
Keelung City
Chi Lo Temple
Taipei City
Hsinchu City
Taoyuan
Taipei
Pei-Hai Vihara
Yung-Ho Ch'an & Pureland Center
San-Ch'ung Ch'an & Pureland Center
Tai-Shan Ch'an & Pureland Center
Hsin-Chuang Ch'an & Pureland Center
Pu-Chao Lecture Hall
Tou-Fen Ch'an & Pureland Center
Ming-Chang Temple
Miaoli Lecture Hall
Hsinchu
Ilan
Miaoli
Lei-Yin Temple
Yuan-Ming Temple
Jen-Ai Retirement Home
Ling-Shan Temple
Taichung City
Tung-Hai Temple
Feng-Yuan Ch'an & Pureland Center
Taichung
Fo-Shan Temple
Changhua Lecture Hall
Yuan-Lin Lecture Hall
Changhua
Nantou
Shou-Feng Vihara
Hualien Ch'an & Pureland Center
Hualien
Pei-Kang Ch'an & Pureland Center
Yunlin
Chiayi City
Penghu
Chiayi
Yuan-Fu Temple
Tainan City
Tainan
Fo Kuang Shan (Headquarters)
Kang-Shan Ch'an & Pureland Center
Hai-Tien Temple
Hsin-Yuan Temple
Kaohsiung
Taitung
Hai-Tien Temple
Pu-Kuo Temple
Tainan Lecture Hall
Yung-Kang Ch'an & Pureland Center
Shin-Ying Lecture Hall
Tai-Tung Ch'an & Pureland Center
Kaohsiung City
Pingtung
P'u-Hsien Temple
Shou-Shan Temple
Ta-Chang Ch'an & Pureland Center
Hsiao-Kang Lecture Hall
Ping-Tung Lecture Hall

Figure 4.11: Fo Guang Shan Distribution of Branch Temples in Taiwan, 1996

Source: Fu Chi-ying (1996), *Handing Down the Light*

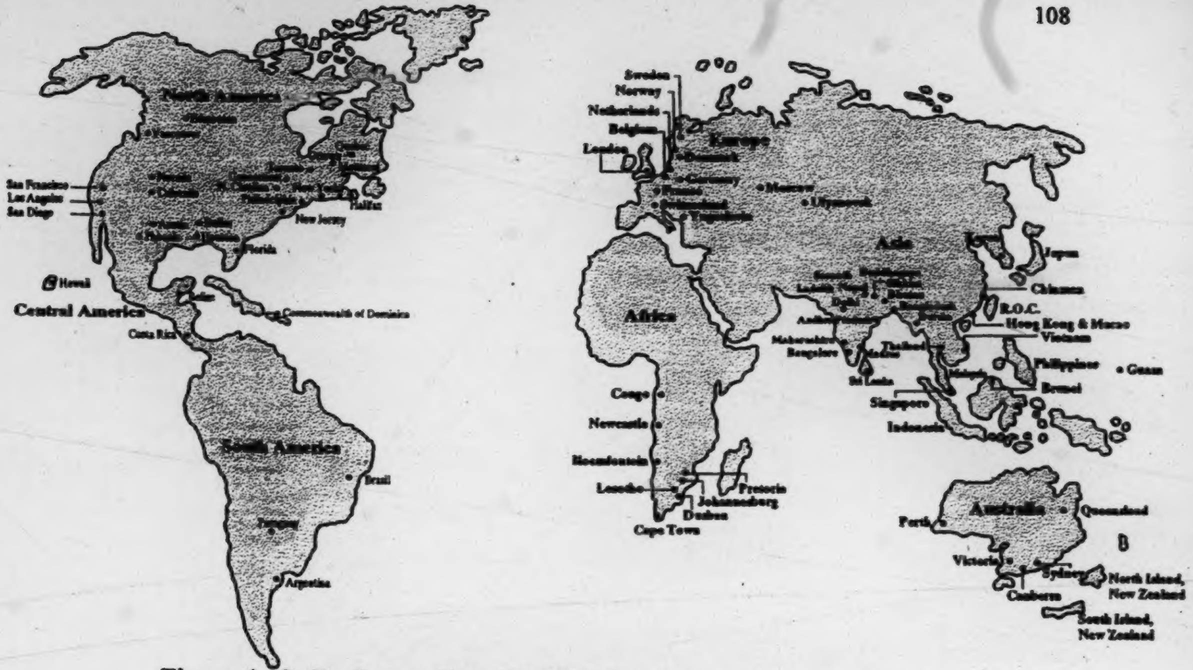
North America
San Francisco
Los Angeles
San Diego
New Jersey
Halifax
Florida
Hawaii
Central America
Commonwealth of Dominica
Costa Rica
South America
Brasil
Argentina
Sweden
Norway
Netherlands
Belgium
London
Europe
Moscow
Asia
Japan
Chinatown
R.O.C.
Hong Kong & Macao
Vietnam
Philippines
Guam
Brunei
Africa
Bangalore
Sri Lanka
Singapore
Indonesia
Congo
Newcastle
Bloemfontein
Lesotho
Pretoria
Johannesburg
Durban
Cape Town
Australia
Queensland
Perth
Victoria
Sydney
Canberra
North Island, New Zealand
South Island, New Zealand
B

Figure 4.12: Fo Guang Shan Global Distribution of Branch Temples, 1996

Source: Fu Chi-ying (1996), *Handing Down the Light*

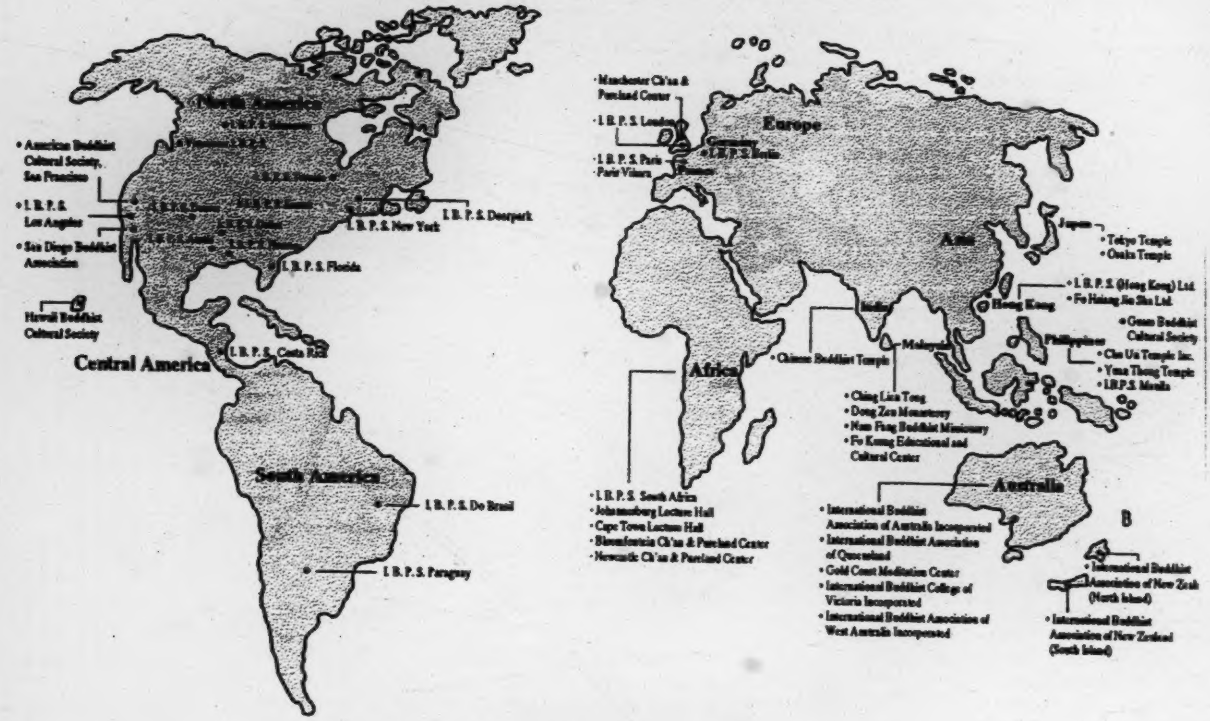
North America
• American Buddhist Cultural Society, San Francisco
• I. B. P. S. Los Angeles
• San Diego Buddhist Association
Hawaii Buddhist Cultural Society
I. B. P. S. Deerpark
I. B. P. S. New York
I. B. P. S. Florida
I. B. P. S. Costa Rica
Central America
South America
I. B. P. S. Do Brasil
I. B. P. S. Paraguay
• Manchester Ch'an & Pureland Center
• I. B. P. S. London
• I. B. P. S. Paris
• Paris Vihara
Europe
Germany
• I. B. P. S. Berlin
France
Asia
Japan
• Tokyo Temple
• Osaka Temple
• I. B. P. S. (Hong Kong) Ltd.
• Fo Hsiang Jin Sha Ltd.
Hong Kong
• Guam Buddhist Cultural Society
Philippines
• Chu Un Temple Inc.
• Yuan Thong Temple
• I.B.P.S. Manila
India
• Chinese Buddhist Temple
Malaysia
• Ching Lian Tong
• Dong Zen Monastery
• Nan Fang Buddhist Missionary
• Fo Kuang Educational and Cultural Center
Africa
• I. B. P. S. South Africa
• Johannesburg Lecture Hall
• Cape Town Lecture Hall
• Bloemfontein Ch'an & Pureland Center
• Newcastle Ch'an & Pureland Center
Australia
• International Buddhist Association of Australia Incorporated
• International Buddhist Association of Queensland
• Gold Coast Meditation Center
• International Buddhist College of Victoria Incorporated
• International Buddhist Association of West Australia Incorporated
B
• International Buddhist Association of New Zeal (North Island)
• International Buddhist Association of New Zealand (South Island)

Figure 4.13: The Global Distribution of BLIA Chapters

Source: Fu Chi-ying (1996), *Handing Down the Light*

Fo Guang Shan members have taken the lead in bringing Buddhism into cities and communities across national boundaries and to every corner of the globe, and it was with this vision in mind that the Buddha's Light International Association was established.[35] The larger, blanket organization was originally established in order to provide followers with an opportunity to "sponsor spiritual activities, educational opportunities to purify the human mind, to fulfill one's human potential, and to establish a Buddha's Light Pure Land on earth" (anon., n.d.#2: 1). The inauguration of the BLIA World Headquarters and the First General Conference was held at the Hsi Lai Temple (in Los Angeles) from May 17th to May 22nd, 1992. Both former United States President George Bush, and President Li Teng-huei of the Republic of China sent representatives and letters of congratulations in honor of the event. The transnational character of BLIA is evident in the fact that delegates from fifty-one regions attended the gathering, with representatives from the southern, northern, exoteric, and esoteric Buddhist traditions (as well as monastics and members of the lay community) [anon., n.d.#2: 2].

Although the official inauguration ceremony of the Buddha's Light International Association was held on May 17th, 1992, the actual establishment of the organization can be traced to 1990, when the first official meeting was held in Taipei. Over one hundred members were in attendance on August 10th, 1990, when the organization's first decisions were made. Among these decisions were the name of the organization and its objectives, as well as the official by-laws and obligations of the newly formed group.[36] In discussing the objectives of the group, the "Four Stanzas of BLIA" were formed:

1. Kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity permeates the world
2. Benefit heaven, earth, and treasure opportunities to make friends
3. Practice Ch'an and chanting, cultivate moral and tolerance
4. Maintain humility and gratitude, making the greatest vows

According to Hsing Yun's (2002a: 23) texts, on August 19th 1990, BLIA registered with the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of China, and applied for permission to officially organize. On February 3rd, 1991, the Buddha's Light International Association of the Republic of China was formally inaugurated in Taipei. The event drew more than five thousand representatives, all of whom voted to elect Master Hsing Yun the President of the Republic of China chapter. During the ceremony, the President of the Republic of China (Li Teng-huei) presented his congratulatory message, and proclaimed the event to be the most important inauguration for a religious-based organization in many years. Since that time, over one hundred regional chapters have been established around the world, and applications for new chapters are received on a regular basis (Hsing Yun, 2002a: 23).

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[35] Hsing Yun has been quoted as saying that here are four important characteristics that BLIA members should have: 1. A creative personality (because the group only has a short history, and thus has a lot ahead of them in order to propagate the dharma). 2. Wanting to establish good relations with others (in order to carry out their work). 3. A thankful personality (to show appreciation for the good deeds of others). 4. A magnanimous personality. Source: Free cassette tape from the Edmonton International Buddhist Progress Society.

[36] See Appendix Three for BLIA objectives, guidelines for joining the organization, and so on.

Following the establishment of BLIA in the Republic of China, and the United States a year later, many other countries soon organized chapters of their own. Canada, Brazil, Argentina, Australia, New Zealand, France, England, and Germany were among the earliest countries to develop chapters. The Philippines, Malaysia, Japan, South Africa, and Hong Kong soon followed. Eventually, more than sixty countries joined the organization, and by September of 1991, BLIA arranged the first planning meeting to begin building communications between chapters.[37] On May 16th, 1992, as BLIA celebrated its grand opening at the Los Angeles Music Center, the four thousand-plus representatives in attendance again elected Hsing Yun president of the Los Angeles chapter. Vice-presidents were also elected from Japan, Hong Kong, Australia, and Sri Lanka (Hsing Yun, 2002a: 23). The election results were demonstrative of the transnational character and harmony that BLIA is meant to represent. Since its inception, BLIA has seen education, culture, practice, and service as its primary objectives. In doing so, BLIA has provided lay devotees with the opportunity to volunteer and participate in Buddhist charity work, thus not only establishing links to local communities, but also bringing new members into the organization. This notwithstanding, it is difficult to measure the success of Hsing Yun's efforts at establishing a non-Asian following, with no long term records of membership or ethnic identity.

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[37] While there are no official records regarding the ethnicity of BLIA members, from the photographs and videos I have seen, along with the interviews I have conducted, it would seem that the large Chinese membership base that has occurred in Canada has also occurred in chapters throughout the globe.

Members of the Buddha's Light International Association believe that their management system works in such a large organization because of the principle of communication in the "ten directions" at all times. According to Hsing Yun, such communication expands viewpoints, opens hearts, and broadens perspectives. This in turn allows people to get along with leaders, and leaders to get along with management. Hsing Yun (2002a: 45) contends that when one does not follow regulations, one is not able to complete their tasks. Thus, since its inception, BLIA has grown by reaching out to the world while its members work toward common goals. Furthermore, given that the organization has goals of modernization and globalization, unity has become extremely important to the group. This unity is expressed both through BLIA's ceremonies and services, and through the conduct of its members. Basic examples of this is the lotus gesture that members use, the vests that they wear as uniforms, their methods of practice and the guidelines that are used when holding activities, their meeting procedures and the manner in which others are addressed, and so on.[38] Each of these examples can be seen as expressions of the group's spirit of unity. This unity is reinforced by the fact that once you become a member of BLIA, you are considered a member for life. Furthermore, Hsing Yun has established a detailed collection of specific guidelines for his followers, which are intended to coordinate all aspects of their lives.[39] These guidelines are followed by members in Taiwan, Canada, and the United States, and further, at temples and chapters in countries around the world.

Hsi Lai Temple is the largest Buddhist monastery in the Western hemisphere and encompasses an area of fifteen acres. The temple was built in 1988 to serve as a spiritual and cultural center for those who are interested in learning more about Buddhism and the Chinese culture. The name "Hsi Lai" means "coming to the West", and the temple was so named in order to signify that Buddhism is coming to the West from the East (anon., n.d.#3: 1). This Californian temple is a monasterial operation of the International Buddhist Progress Society (the non-profit organization that is individually incorporated under BLIA in each city that it is established). According to the information pamphlet that BLIA has provided, the objectives of Hsi Lai Temple are to "nurture Buddhist missionaries through education, to propagate Buddhism through cultural activities, to benefit society through charitable programs, and to edify the populace through Buddhist practices" (anon., n.d.#3: 1).

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[38] The lotus gesture is a mantra or hand gesture that is performed by some members when they meet.

[39] These guidelines will be discussed later in the chapter and can also be examined in Appendix Three.

The temple maintains the traditional architecture of ancient Chinese monasteries, yet it is also equipped with modern, state of the art facilities. Given its transnational goals, it is interesting to note that the monastery was built with construction materials from around the world – materials were provided by Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand, Italy, the United States, and so on. The total cost to build the temple exceeded US$30 million, and it was thus financed by donations from Buddhist devotees and patrons from Taiwan, the United States, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and various other countries around the world (anon., n.d.#3: 2). There is a museum located on the first level of the left wing, the interior of which is decorated with labyrinths of ancient Greek mythologies. In the museum a large collection of Buddhist artifacts from a variety of countries around the world are exhibited. In addition, Hsi Lai Temple contains meeting and conference rooms, and the level below the Main Shrine includes a canteen where visitors are welcome to a vegetarian buffet between 11:30am to 1:30pm daily (at minimal cost). The Requiem Pagoda and Tripitaka Hall are private monastic areas that house the temple's collection of Buddhist scriptures. The temple also houses administrative offices, classrooms, a library, and a souvenir shop (anon., n.d.#3: 3).

Hsi Lai University offers degrees for bachelor of arts, masters of arts, and a doctor of philosophy in Buddhist Studies and Religious Studies. The Department of Religious Studies at the university is dedicated to furthering religious understanding between the culture and religion of the East and the West. Through its close connections with Asia, and the courses in Buddhist Studies, Comparative Religious Studies, and Buddhist Canonical Languages (Chinese, Pali, Sanskrit, and Tibetan) that are offered, the department presents students with a unique opportunity to study religion in both Eastern and Western contexts (anon., n.d.#4: 1). The library that is housed on campus includes both general reference works and specialized works in religious studies, economics, and business. Not surprisingly, a substantial portion of the library's religious studies collection is devoted to Buddhism, much of which is available in languages from around the world. In addition, the student computer lab is well equipped with Windows-based

PCs and up-to-date software (anon., n.d.#4: 2). Billed as a tourist attraction, the pamphlets explains that, when the library and computer lab are placed along side the large auditorium, language lab, dining hall, recreation center, and two dormitories, the university is "well worth the short thirty-five minute drive from the Los Angeles airport".

According to its information booklet, Hsi Lai University is dedicated "to the interaction of the best features of Western and Asian cultures". It is open to all students, and the content of the curriculum is designed to achieve an integration of the humanities and the sciences – of theory and practice, as well as the knowledge of East and West. The goal of providing such a curriculum is to foster creativity, adaptability, and leadership within students, thus enabling them to become active and productive members of society (anon., n.d.#4: 2). Hsi Lai University has working relationships with numerous institutions of higher learning in both the United States and abroad, and since its inception has become an internationally renowned university with an acclaimed faculty and well-rounded curriculum.[40] Hsing Yun's goal of spreading the dharma throughout the world is gradually being reached through the establishment of Fo Guang Shan, the Buddha's Light International Association, and the chapters of the International Buddhist Progress Society that have been founded around the globe. The universities, colleges, and libraries that are included in this list are an additional attempt at encouraging understanding and cooperation between the philosophies of East and West.

Philosophy and Practice

Like the Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation, the Buddha's Light International Association has particular guiding principles, missions, and objectives. Hsing Yun, however, has gone significantly further than Cheng Yen in his creation of a long list of guidelines that members of his organization are to follow not only when establishing BLIA chapters, but also in their day-to-day lives. It is through the implementation of Hsing Yun's specifications that members are to become "global individuals of communal living, wise people of rationality, friendly people of giving, and joyous people of happiness". Accordingly, the member's motto is "render others faith, render others joy. Render others hope, render others convenience" (anon., n.d.#2: 5). What follows is a list of Hsing Yun's main principles and guidelines for practice. I have included these guidelines and directives in order to demonstrate that Hsing Yun has attempted to create a specific group of followers around the world – those who not only believe in the Buddhist philosophy, but who will also follow his specifications without question as they continue to enlist new members. This is in sharp contrast to Cheng Yen's guidelines, which were created to be adapted and assimilated with ease by members and non-members around the world, Buddhist or not. Her methods are geared towards helping others without question of faith or lifestyle, recruiting new members as a secondary objective. It is evident from Hsing Yun's principles, objectives, and duties, that he entreats his followers to govern their lives in a particular manner. Hsing Yun is looking for acquiescence, conformity, and compliance from his followers, as he feels this is the best way to govern an organization as large as BLIA.

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[40] Andie (one of my informants) made the comment that Hsi Lai University has become well known around the world due to its large faculty, some of whom were recruited from Harvard, Yale, and Oxford among others. Andie also mentioned that the University has a recent history of working with other well-known educational institutions. As proof of his comments, Andie offered audiovisual material that highlights the university's work. Specifically, there were examples of the university working with other major institutions around the world, along with comments from administrators and staff demonstrating that they

The Guiding Principles of BLIA are:

1. We are indebted to the Buddha's teachings and sincerely respect the Triple Gem; we propagate to benefit all beings and strive to enlighten the world.
2. We promote Living Buddhism and create a Buddha's Light Pure Land; we are pragmatic in worldly affairs and compassionate in providing relief to the world.
3. We observe established formalities and harmonize the world with the Five Dharma Vehicles; we cultivate the Three Studies for a wholesome character.
4. We work with an international outlook and engage in cultural and educational activities; we are broad-minded and respect the multitude (www.blia.ca, 2003).

The Directions of BLIA are:

1. From monastic to laity: to extend to lay followers the opportunity to support the Triple Gem, to spread the Buddhist culture, and to propagate the Dharma.
2. From monastics to society: to penetrate society and the human mind, to let compassion, moral discipline, wisdom, and mindfulness be the source of strength and purification of the human spirit.
3. From self-cultivation to helping others: to encourage fellow Buddhists to

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hold the educational opportunities at the University in high regard.

practice the dual cultivation of happiness and wisdom for self-enlightenment, and at the same time rely on compassion and knowledge to benefit others.
4. From passiveness to involvement: to emulate the spirit of the Buddha by being active and optimistic in dealing with life, thus giving others confidence, hope, joy, and convenience.
5. From disciples to teachers: to train lay followers in skill and wisdom through education programs so that they too can be competent propagating.
6. From our country to the world: the Mahayana spirit is to "emancipate all beings prior to self-salvation", and we are to follow this tradition with firm conviction and a vision that extends across the world (www.blia.ca, 2003)

The Mission of BLIA:

1. Propagate Buddhism with a global outlook.
2. Live daily with a humanistic nature.
3. Benefit the multitude with a compassionate mind.
4. Distinguishing between the truth and heresies with right knowledge and understanding.

The Objectives of BLIA:

1. To promote Humanistic Buddhism.
2. To build a Buddha's Light Pure Land
3. To purify society and the human mind.
4. To realize world peace.

Duties of BLIA members:

1. To encourage the study of Buddhism.
2. To support culture, education, and career programs.
3. To organize social activities.
4. To develop Buddhist education.
5. To disseminate the Dharma internationally (www.blia.ca, 2003)

To Hsing Yun and his followers, there are innumerable benefits of becoming members of the association and following these guidelines. It is assumed that these objectives will provide members with the opportunity to strengthen ties within the organization, to improve intellectually through improved relationships with family and friends, and to spread the Buddhist dharma to the world in an accurate, suitable manner. Moreover, membership (which presupposes submitting to these guidelines) provides opportunities to join career workshops and gain help in job searches, as well as the opportunity to participate in Buddhist study groups and activities. Hsing Yun also instructs his chapters to provide members with assistance when traveling abroad, and to assist members in funerals, weddings, and other celebration services.[41] Continuing his proselytization, Hsing Yun promises that members of the Buddha's Light International Association and its related organizations will be provided the opportunity to "increase self-awareness by getting involved in cultural and religious activities that they would otherwise have been unable to" (www.blia.ca, 2003). Hsing Yun contends in his writings that his goal is to bring Buddhism to the world, and it is evident from the detailed blueprint he has created for BLIA members that he is attempting to do this by generating a lifestyle and philosophy that will both guide his followers, and insure they view the world through the same lens.

The proposed goals of the organization are outlined in its "Four Line Verse", and like the Tzu Chi Foundation, BLIA's emblem is a carefully constructed representation of its mission. The Four Line Verse was designed to be easily understood and remembered:

> *May palms be joined in every world in kindness, compassion, joy, and giving;*
> *May all beings find security in friendship, peace, and loving care;*
> *May calm and mindful practice seed patience and equanimity deep;*
> May we give rise to spacious hearts and humble thoughts of gratitude.

Similarly, the emblem that was chosen by the association was selected to reinforce the objectives of its founder. It is a visual reminder of what the organization stands for. For example, the roundness of BLIA's emblem is meant to represent wholeness and an absence of impediment, as well as the world (the globe) itself. Similarly, the lotus flower was chosen in order to represent the transcendentalism (purity) of BLIA (www.blia.ca, 2003). It is evident that this emblem was chosen to highlight the elements of the association that Hsing Yun and his followers find most favorable.

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[41] This long list of services provided by BLIA around the world excludes those who are not members of the association. It is only those who follow Hsing Yun's guidelines and demonstrate "right action" within the group that are privy to such benefits. This is clear both from Hsing Yun's own writings and from the interviews I conducted in Edmonton and Vancouver. These interviews will be highlighted later in the chapter.

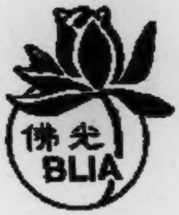

Figure 4.14: The BLIA Emblem

Source: *Hsi Lai University*

Similar to the Tzu Chi Foundation, BLIA is an organization that is based on the thought and charisma of the founder of the religious order. Both world Buddhist organizations have increased worldwide membership as their goal, but as I have already demonstrated, the motives of Cheng Yen and Hsing Yun are different and at times contrary. Moreover, members of the Buddha's Light International Association subscribe to a more detailed ideal of Buddhist life than members of the Tzu Chi Foundation. Through careful sanctions and prescriptions Hsing Yun has encouraged adherence to his ideals with general effectiveness. A notable result of these sanctions is that BLIA has been able to achieve a greater degree of unity than Taiwanese Buddhism has as a whole (Jones, 1999: 192). This is a situation that members are well aware of, and during the interviews I conducted I learned that both nuns and laity feel that standardization is the only way to run a large organization without dissension. Hsing Yun, especially, sees standardization as vital to the success of his organization. Nevertheless, it may be in part to such stringent guidelines, that BLIA has thus far, been unable to gain a large non-Asian, Western following. Westerners are generally unfamiliar with the traditional Buddhist sangha, and may be unwilling to confine their lives to such specific, detailed codes of conduct, choosing instead to follow those forms of Eastern philosophy that focus on the general rather than the specific. According to Hsing Yun, however, his organization's strict regulations are intended to create a comfortable working atmosphere and provide against noncompliance.

A further example of Hsing Yun's standardization is the specific rules of dress that he has created for his followers. Periodically, debates arise about standardizing the monastic clothing in the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China. These debates, however, are usually inconclusive, and there has yet to be an agreed-upon body to set and enforce the standards. Thus, to this day, monks and nuns may wear clothing of any cut and color, constrained only by the provisions of the vinaya and the need to be recognized as clergy by their fellow citizens (Jones, 1999: 192). As I have already documented, members of the Tzu Chi Foundation avoid wearing robes entirely and instead choose to wear simple uniforms based on traditional Chinese dress. Since members of the Tzu Chi Foundation prefer to bring charity and relief to the world first, and teach the Buddhist dharma second, the less members look like traditional Buddhists, the easier it is to reach all people, regardless of ethnicity or faith. Among members of Fo Guang Shan, however, monastic robes have been standardized to such an extent that they function as uniforms. Once you understand the system, it is relatively effortless to recognize whether a monk or nun is a novice, a student, or a fully ordained cleric. This is true whether you step into a temple in Taiwan, South Africa, or Canada, and it is one of the first things I noticed when I visited temples in Vancouver and Edmonton. In fact, even the laity changes into specific robes before services begin. One of the nuns I spoke to in Vancouver explained that Buddhists change into robes out of respect (those who remain in their street clothes have yet to become full Buddhists). For instance, devotees who have taken the three refuges wear black robes with brown, and those who have taken the five precepts wear brown robes. As a consequence, the ranking of members is clearly evident at all times and during all ceremonies and services. Hsing Yun had established a method of dress that makes each member's level of commitment and progress apparent to all.

Figure 4.15:Example of BLIA Member's Robes

One final example of BLIA's standardization is the highly systematic ranking of the clergy. Because the organization is large, it involves thousands of clergy, human resource issues, evaluation of job performances, and individual advancements. According to Hsing Yun, such issues cannot rely on personal relationships and recommendations because the "possibility for factionalism and grievances would be too great". Consequently, Hsing Yun relies on modern, impersonal management systems. The clergy of the Fo Guang Shan Monastery and its related temples are divided into grades and ranks based partly on seniority and partly on personal cultivation, job skills, and scholastic achievement (Jones, 1999: 192). The board of directors holds an annual evaluation meeting in which they decide who to promote. This is comparable to the large public monasteries of the past, but Fo Guang Shan uses a distinct system of grades and ranks. Rather than using the traditional division of 'eastern' and 'western' ranks, Hsing Yun has divided his followers into Pure Grade, Study Grade, Practice Grade, Open Rank, and Master. Although available only in Chinese at the present time, Hsing Yun has written a booklet that details the ranking and evaluation methods that are used within the organization. It is interesting to note, however, that this booklet is made available to clergy only, and not to the laity or to the general public. Hsing Yun's distinction between ranks places importance on the distinction between the clergy and the laity, as well as between the members themselves. One gets the impression that doors will be opened and secrets revealed the higher a member climbs within the association, something that is possible only when Hsing Yun's guidelines are observed.

There are eight specific guidelines for all meetings held by BLIA chapters and temples. These guidelines range from the general (members should attend a variety of meetings), to the specific (the president's speech should be concise and clear, and reports should be between three and five minutes), to the very specific (members should enthusiastically join all meetings, and during the course of a year each member should try to speak at least three times) [Hsing Yun, 2002a: 44]. Similarly, there are ten "Specific Rules of Conduct". Again, these guidelines range from the broad to the very specific. Members are told that they should not borrow or lend money, and they are instructed to have at least three members in their group when they join the organization. In celebration of the Buddha's birthday, the New Year, or a member's birthday, followers are expected to show their respect by mailing cards that are provided by BLIA. Similarly, while members are permitted to participate in weddings, funerals, celebrations, and chanting activities for one another, they are not permitted to arrange or perform dharma functions or repentance ceremonies (Hsing Yun, 2002a: 45). Hsing Yun has created guidelines for his follower's social relationships as well. There are specific rules for such things as greeting other members and how often members should contact one another each month. Finally, BLIA has twelve guidelines regarding the practice of Fo Guang Shan Buddhism. Among these guidelines are prescriptions on how often members are to recite the BLIA verse (each day after morning and evening chanting, and before meals and at gatherings), the expectation that members are to make an effort to study Buddhism by joining at least one of the reading groups that are offered by each temple, and the continued cultivation of the Seven Characteristics (respect, tolerance, equality, joy, morality, forbearance, and humanism) [2002a: 47].

Along with the guidelines that Hsing Yun has created for members, are the guidelines for the BLIA organizational system. The Buddha's Light International Association has a carefully constructed personnel system. The group evaluates personnel on various levels, but the standard evaluation is based on the three principles of education, practice, and achievement. Monastic personnel are divided into five levels and nineteen grades (*Qing Qingshi, Xueshi, Xiushi, Kaishi, Da Shi*). Within this personnel system there exists five promotional stages (depending on the level), and through the efforts of the 'Handing Down the Light Committee' the evaluation process is meant to be open and objective (Hsing Yun, 2002a: 79). Those members who follow the path of the lay person are called *Qiaoshi* and *Shigu*, with the highest level entitled *Xiushi*. There are four levels of lay people, and these can be broken down into devotees, members, dharma protectors, and benefactors. Devotees are strongly urged to remain uninvolved with monastic business.

The assignment of duties within BLIA chapters is based on the premise that each monastic's talent and individual potential should be developed to the highest degree. Ideally, each monastic is given the opportunity to learn all the duties in a temple (with an average assignment running from one to three years). The reality, however, is that most temples are too small to have the facilities needed to accommodate such a guideline. The Vancouver chapter is considered to be fairly large, yet there are only five nuns. The Edmonton chapter only has one nun, and she is obligated to perform all temple duties. Branch Temples are established in cities with a population of over one million (with full Chinese architecture), while temple branches (like that in Edmonton and Vancouver), lecture halls, and learning centers are established in cities with populations of over two hundred thousand. The latter do not resemble that of a traditional Chinese temple, but instead are situated inside a modern city building. It is interesting to note that Vancouver has well over one million people, yet BLIA has not added a full Branch Temple to the city. This decision is based on Vancouver's slow rate of membership increase. Finally, there are also meditation centers erected in the country or in small villages. Clearly, the majority of these branches need to make allowances and changes in the regular Fo Guang Shan assignment of duties in order to meet the needs of its members.

Along with these specifications, there are similar guidelines as to how the money that is collected through volunteers, donations, and fund-raising efforts will be allotted. Those who take care of this money cannot make decisions as to how it will be spent. In addition, there are rules as to how benefits will be shared among BLIA members. All members are ideally given the opportunity to take a vacation, travel, study abroad, and enjoy advanced practice. As a result, among his guidelines, Hsing Yun has included a specific formula for members traveling to a foreign country, receiving medical care, and gaining old age benefits. These specifications extend as far as how to handle parent's birthdays, and the passing away of parents or other family members (Hsing Yun, 2002a: 124). Another opportunity that Hsing Yun has created is the Xiang Hai Cultural and Business Corporation (established in 1997) that works with the Fo Guang Publishing Company in order to serve as a bridge between Buddhist culture and societal communications. The group distributes Buddhist books, audio and videotapes, and cultural merchandise at each of its branch temples (including the two that I visited in Edmonton and Vancouver). Hsing Yun (2002a: 124) explains that this provides the general public with an opportunity to come into further contact with Buddhism.

Buddhists established monastic residences and lecture halls first in India, and later in China (during the Tang Dynasty, 618-906 CE). Hsing Yun explains in his writings that later, when many Buddhist masters assembled their disciples to practice Ch'an Buddhism and preach the dharma, their monasteries were called 'bodhisattva monasteries' (2002a: 1). These monasteries, and those that followed later, were established in an effort to teach the dharma to others, helping all people in their quest for enlightenment. BLIA members are encouraged to follow this same bodhisattva spirit. A few of the members that I spoke with quoted Hsing Yun's statement that the goal of the association is to use compassion to "save all sentient beings and purify the world". Members of BLIA see this as their responsibility, and through cultural and educational programs they focus on creating harmony among groups and individuals. Hsing Yun (2002a: 2) contends that this is the meaning and spirit of both the bodhisattva monastery and the Buddha's Light International Association.

It is said that after the Buddha attained enlightenment under the bodhi tree, he taught that all sentient beings posses buddha-nature. Hsing Yun (2002a: 3) asserts that this realization brings hope and light to those who are suffering, and it demonstrates that all humans are equal. According to BLIA followers, these insights are the foundation needed for human beings to reach eternal peace, and as such, they provide guidance that can benefit the entire world. Related to this is the notion that the Buddha established equality within the sangha. Using 'compassion and tolerance' as a guiding principle for harmony among people, the Buddha is said to have argued against the differentiation of caste and ethnicity when facilitating the spread of the dharma. Hsing Yun (2002a: 3) uses this argument to support his belief that Buddhism can adapt in a similar way to communities and cultures as it spreads throughout the world. Nevertheless, in using this argument, Hsing Yun makes no mention of the differentiation of status that he has created within his own organization, nor of the traditional Buddhist sangha that is maintained within each new location that BLIA is established. The maintenance of such traditions and the differentiation of status may impede the adaptation of Hsing Yun's philosophy to non-Asian communities across the globe.

Regardless, from its inception, Fo Guang Shan has promoted all schools of Buddhism, and has followed the principles presented by Buddhist masters from both India and China. For instance, some of the themes from past BLIA conferences are: Joy and Harmony, Oneness and Co-existence, Respect and Tolerance, Equality and Peace, and Wholeness and Freedom. BLIA members work towards promoting harmony among not only different religions, but also among different schools of Buddhism. In an effort to promote his view of harmony, Hsing Yun writes his teachings in a manner that will both draw readers in and make his advice easier to understand. For example, in his semi-monthly column in *Merit Times*, a newspaper produced by BLIA, Hsing Yun recently wrote an article entitled "The Main and Supporting Cast". Hsing Yun (2002b: 1) begins his article with a discussion of the 2002 Oscars, and the awards for best actress/actor and best supporting actress/actor. He argues that the Academy recognizes both those who have a leading role in a movie *and* those who do not have a leading role, because without the support of the latter a picture would never make it to the big screen. He points out that the production of a movie is the result of a collective effort. The point behind Hsing Yun's discussion, is that while a supporting role is not necessarily inferior to a leading role, in life it is not always easy for people to play "second fiddle". Nevertheless, according to the law of causation, without a good supporting actress/actor there may not be a good leading woman/man. As Hsing Yun (2002b: 1) explains it, "although a lotus flower is very beautiful, its green background leaves bring out its brilliance…if a person has the ability to be the main character, he/she should also be willing to play the supporting role and vise versa". Thus, it is understandable that each of us aspires to be the main player, but when that goal is unattainable we must play our individual roles to the best of our abilities. Accordingly, the supporting role, whether it lies within a relationship, a career, or a religious organization, is just as important and valuable as a leading role.

Buddhism is known for being a spiritual tradition that promotes joy and compassion. In the Lotus Sutra, it is written that the Buddha was both born into the human world, and later became enlightened in the human world.[42] Similarly, Guan Yin is said to have returned to the human world after her enlightenment in order to save human beings from suffering. Maitreya (the Buddha of the future), is often called the 'joyful Buddha', and like Guan Yin and the Buddha, it is believed that Maitreya practiced the religion with joy in order to achieve buddhahood. Hsing Yun (2002a) uses these examples to demonstrate the fourth aspect of his organization: the nature of the Buddha's teachings is joyous. According to the nuns that I spoke with, Fo Guang Shan "gives joyfulness to people", and BLIA members believe that it is vital to realize this truth in order to spread the dharma and end suffering. In his texts Hsing Yun argues that in order to benefit future generations, the spirit of BLIA follows the example of ancient masters. BLIA takes the bodhisattva monastery and the *prajna* life as the center of their practice.[43] The fact that "all dharma realms are one" forms the basis of their thoughts, and the existence of joy in the 'human realm' is the basis of their practice. BLIA members believe that they need the determination to follow these principles in order to benefit both themselves and others.

When discussing Buddhism's perspective on compassion, Hsing Yun contends that while the Buddhist Tripitaka and Twelve Canons may appear to be very complex, compassion is the meaning that lies behind them all.[44] In his discussion, Hsing Yun explains the meaning and definition of compassion, and in doing so he argues that compassion is about more than simply turning a blind eye to the unacceptable behavior of others. Compassion is instead a form of purified love, which includes service that is offered out of selflessness and wisdom, a contribution made without expecting anything in return, and a sacrifice made out of resolve.[45] According to Hsing Yun (2001a: 20), the only way to build good interpersonal relationships is through the practice of all forms of compassion, but he further explains that this should be accomplished in combination with wisdom (or the unintended result will be over-tolerance). Accordingly, the power and value of compassion is more than just smiles and praises – it can (and should) also be exhibited in the form of wisdom and integrity.

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[42] The *White Lotus of the True Dharma Sutra* (*Saddharma-pundarika Sutra*) was a highly influential Mahayana scripture that was to become the basic text of the T'ien T'ai School.

[43] The *prajna* life refers to the Prajnaparamita Sutras, which is the term for a series of about forty Mahayana sutras that were gathered together under this name because they deal with the realization of prajna, or intuitive wisdom. The Diamond Sutra and the Heart Sutra, which are well-known in the West, are two examples of this intuitive wisdom. The Truth of Sunyata, or emptiness, is central to these sutras, which teach non-detachment to self or dharmas. Source: Snelling, 1987.

[44] Included in this discussion were prayers for the victims and families of the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11th, 2001. See Appendix Five for a copy of these prayers. Also note that the Tripitaka and the Twelve Canons are the canons of Buddhist scriptures.

The analysis of the mind in Buddhism is both multi-faceted and sophisticated, and wisdom is an important factor in this analysis. As a spiritual practice, Buddhism contains numerous descriptions of the nature and function of the mind, as well as instructions on how to search for wisdom, abide with it, and refine it. As Hsing Yun (2001b: 23) explains in his discussions on Buddhism and psychology, all the Buddha's teachings deal with the mind, which is evident in a multitude of sutras (among which, is the psychological understanding that is spoken by the Mind-only [Yogacara] School).[46] He argues that since the middle of the twentieth century, Western psychology has absorbed considerable wisdom from Eastern cultures – most especially from Buddhist philosophy and practices. It is with this in mind, that Hsing Yun argues that Buddhist psychology represents an important and comprehensive science of mental health, and that in their search for wisdom the members of BLIA should recognize the importance of compassion. Hsing Yun believes that this is an aspect of Buddhism that members of BLIA can offer to communities around the world. By adapting to the needs of the people, BLIA members attempt to meet the demands of modernization by both providing solutions to human problems, and by providing an improvement in social well-being. As a result, by using methods which are slightly more ambitious than those of Cheng Yen and the Tzu Chi Foundation, Hsing Yun increases his ability to recruit new members globally as compassion and sacrifice are adapted to the demands of today's society.

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[45] This form of purified love is the love that Hsing Yun expects from his followers through their service and contributions – sacrifices made without expecting anything but compassion in return.

[46] The Yogacara School sees the mind as consisting of eight consciousnesses, which indicates that it is not made up of a single element, but an interactive complexity of factors. These factors are the six sensory organs of the human body (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mental function), and the consciousness that constantly grasps the "self" (the Manas) and the Alaya consciousness (the supraconsciousness) that collects and stores all karmic seeds of the mind in the ongoing cycle of birth and death of all sentient beings. The Mind-only School further classifies the psychological responses of the human beings into fifty-one

Hsing Yun (2001b) has argued that our world is midway between heaven and hell, and that there are two roads ahead of each person: one to heaven and one to hell (the road we choose is entirely up to us). There is a tale in the sutras that relates why some people enter heaven while others fall into hell – the moral of the story being that there are just causes leading to rebirth into either realm. Hsing Yun tells his followers that if they do not have right understanding of what constitutes a wholesome act, they may be surprised when they have to face the consequences of their actions. Many religions believe in the existence of heavens and hells, and Buddhism is no exception. Hsing Yun teaches the existence of a heavenly realm and a hellish realm. These two realms together with the asura, human, animal, and hungry ghost realms make up the six realms of existence. Hsing Yun (2001b: 3) teaches his followers that which realm they are reborn into depends on their cumulative karma. This karma is determined by the actions one makes in each life, the theory being that if one follows Hsing Yun's guidelines of compassion, equanimity, wisdom, etc., then his or her chances for a rebirth in heaven are greatly increased.[47] Accordingly, the way to heaven is through not only the three meritorious acts of giving alms, observing precepts, and practising meditative concentrations, but also through membership of the Buddha's Light International Association (Hsing Yun, 2000b: 10). With the 'goal' of a heavenly rebirth for his followers Hsing Yun wrote "How to Change Your Own Destiny", published in the semi-monthly *Buddha's Light Newsletter*. In it, Hsing Yun contends that our destinies are in our own hands and can thus be changed in a number of ways:

1. A dollar can change your destiny – it can be used for buying a book on how to conduct yourself in a correct manner.
2. A good word can change your destiny.
3. A good deed can change your destiny.
4. A little knowledge can change your destiny.
5. A little accommodation can change your destiny – through the field of

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categories, and refers to them as "the attributes of the mind" (Hsing Yun, 2001b: 4).

[47] The heavens are seen as delightful places, but the bliss is not everlasting. Heavenly blessings are the results of wholesome karma, and as such they are conditioned. When the effects/rewards of this karma comes to an end, they still have to course through the cycle of rebirth. Hell, on the other hand, is reserved for those with the most weighty , unwholesome karma – but this too comes to an end as the cycle of rebirth is begun once more (Hsing Yun, 2000b: 10).

assistance.

6. A smile can change your destiny – due to its impact on others (2001c: 7).

In other words, each one of us can change our own destiny, but we must first believe that our destiny is in our own hands. Through a focus on good acts and deeds – and through membership in the Buddha's Light International Association – we will not only change our destiny, but also ensure our karmic chances of being reborn into heaven.

Spreading the Dharma

Hsing Yun has structured his organization so his goal of dharma propagation will be accomplished through cultural activities. The Fo Guang Shan Foundation for Buddhist Culture and Education sponsors numerous activities related to the spread of Buddhist culture and philosophy. The Foundation organized the Eastern Taiwan Artists Association Calligraphy Exhibition, the reprinting of the Chinese Buddhist Encyclopedia, and the publication of various Buddhist magazines (*Awaken the World Magazine*, and *Universal Gate Magazine* to name just two). It also sponsors the Fo Guang Shan Short Term Novitiate Program, advanced research programs, the opportunity for scholars to study in the United States, Japan, Korea, and India, the founding of universities in the United States and Taiwan, and so on (anon., 1996: 5). Along with this Foundation, the Fo Guang Shan Tripitaka Board (a committee of scholars and monastics) has been working towards the creation of a contemporary Tripitaka edition (in Chinese), which applies to the modern age through new organization methods, structure, punctuation, and indexing. Similarly, the Fo Guang Shan Publishing House has produced numerous audio and videotapes in Mandarin, Taiwanese, Cantonese, Hakka, and English. This list includes forty-four publications of sermons and sutras, thirty-four songs and music, four television programs, and seven video tapes (in 1995, over 250,000 audio and 35,000 video tapes were in circulation) [anon., 1996: 8]. The audio-visual center that was established at Fo Guang Shan in 1988 was created in order to spread the Buddha's teachings to all people. The center is equipped to record, photograph, and produce radio plays and television programs.

In the video documentary that is included with the "Thirtieth Anniversary Report" (1996), Hsing Yun speaks of fostering talent through monastic and secular education.

BLIA thus provides not only human resource training, but also full monastic and secular education. In 1965, Hsing Yun founded the Fo Guang Shan campus, and increasing enrollment required continued expansion. Fo Guang Shan's outstanding faculty of monastics and scholars has attracted a diverse student body. Hsing Yun's goal of dharma propagation is being met through the continued attendance of students from the United States, Canada, Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and the Congo. The current growth rate at the University is twenty-seven percent, and almost a third of these students are from countries other than China (source: 30th Anniversary Video). This notwithstanding, however, the majority of the students who come from countries other than China, are Chinese, Taiwanese, and Vietnamese (pers. comm., anon., 2003). Along with these cultural and educational programs, members of the Buddha's Light International Association are making an effort to spread their philosophy through philanthropic programs.

The Foguang Clinic was founded in 1976, and provides medical care for low-income patients, as well as monastics and staff, retirees at the Fo Guang Shan Retirement Home, students at the local high school, local residents, visitors and devotees. Medical services at the clinic include traditional and Western medical care, acupuncture, dental, and optical services. An estimated thirty-three thousand patients receive care from the clinic every year, and operation and medical costs exceed NT$6 million annually (anon., 1996: 30). Similarly, the Cloud and Water Mobile Unit, is a clinic that was founded in 1985. This clinic uses Fo Guang Shan subsidiary temples as centers, with mobile vans as hospitals. It provides weekly scheduled services by delivering free medical care to every corner of Taiwan, "just like the clouds and water that cover the earth". With the future goal of five hundred vans, the clinic has grown from the initial one van to fifteen, and in 1995 it served over one hundred thousand patients in twelve counties, thirty districts, and ninety-eight villages. The clinic has an operating budget of NT$10 million (anon., 1996: 31).

In addition to these clinics, BLIA has organized a Winter Relief Campaign for the last fifteen years. The campaign provides monetary and material gifts to those with low income and those who are disadvantaged. In 1995, almost two thousand families received relief. Similarly, the Emergency Aid Program (established in 1976) provides materials, financial support, food assistance, funeral services, and so on, for needy victims of disasters or accidents. Over ten thousand people were helped in 1995 (anon., 1996: 31). Members of the Friendship and Care Brigade visit foster and senior citizens homes to perform regular personal care service. The Guan Yin Life Conservation Group was founded in 1971, and like these other groups it was founded in order to provide help to others while also spreading the Buddha's teachings.

Hsing Yun provides his followers with a detailed list of practices that members are to use in spreading the dharma, but as with his earlier guidelines for dharma propagation, they have been significantly more successful in Taiwan than they have in Canada.[48] In his drive to bring Buddhism to every corner of the globe, Hsing Yun established a transcription office early in his career, and the *Fo Guang Textbooks* was the first major work that he produced. In his introduction to the books, Hsing Yun explains that in order to make the content of these texts more inclusive and judicious, he invited various Buddhist elders and scholars to assist both in the compiling and writing of chapters in the collections (i.e.: the chapter on Tibetan Buddhism was proofread by Lama Tian Pi-shuang, a member of the Board of Directors of the Chinese and Tibetan Cultural Association). It is interesting to note that included in these texts is a chapter on Taoism, in which Hsing Yun requested comments from an expert on the subject, Kung Peng-cheng who is president of Nan Hua University. This is especially interesting – and indicative of Hsing Yun's goal of reaching across boundaries – because his followers are strongly opposed to any forms of fortune-telling or superstition. The texts have twelve volumes in each set, and they are meant to assist practitioners in both learning the basic Buddhist concepts, as well as multi-functional learning. The texts advocate the modernization of Buddhism, and place their focus on the world in which we live. In addition, importance is placed on the systematization of Buddhism and the future development of Humanistic Buddhism.

These texts are not aimed at experts and scholars, but rather are designed to assist the beginner in understanding Buddhism. A large section of the texts are devoted to the foundation of basic Buddhist knowledge, and because of this Hsing Yun (2002a: 1) believes the content to be unsuitable for scholarly research and verification. In these texts Hsing Yun explores both the history of Buddhism and the interruptions in the continuity of its spread, hoping that such a discussion may assist future improvements in the practice of the religion. The texts are used in monasteries and Buddhist colleges around the world, as well as in seminars and study groups sponsored by the Buddha's Light International Association. For many years the goals of Fo Guang Shan and BLIA have been to create a religious framework that will spread through the world. Practical methods are used in order to spread the dharma, and its achievements are visible in Asian communities everywhere. How successful this impact is on non-Asian communities around the globe, however, is yet to be determined. Yet Hsing Yun's efforts continue.

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[48] Hsing Yun lists twelve methods to propogate the dharma: 1.Individual practice 2.Joint practice of monastics and laity 3.Repentance ceremonies 4.Dharma functions 5.Eight precepts retreat 6.Chanting the Buddha's name together 7.Intensive seven-day retreats 8.Teaching meditation 9.Religious pilgrimage 10. Tours of Buddhist holy sites 11.Ecumenical Buddhist outreach 12.Tour of branch temples.

Hsing Yun explains that today's Buddhist disciples should not be disappointed in what the Buddha taught. He believes that Buddhist traditions should be applied "creatively" through the designing and creating of charts, flyers and posters, and by publishing newspapers and magazines. Similarly, with modern technology there is the possibility of using radio, television, computers, and the Internet as tools for spreading Buddhism. BLIA indeed takes advantage of each of these opportunities. Hsing Yun (2002a: 13) argues that using such methods is similar to the Buddha, who used his "long tongue" (supernatural powers) to teach and spread the dharma. In addition to such methods BLIA has established numerous public service organizations. They have established the Buddha's Light Retirement Home and many free medical clinics and cemeteries. As it has already been stated, the processes of birth, life, old age, sickness, and death can be attended to by Fo Guang Shan.

In the past, Buddhism emphasized the importance of making pilgrimages, traveling, and visiting. Today, Chinese Buddhism still values the importance of pilgrimage to sacred sites, as well as visits with monastics at temples, meditation, and discussion to enhance one's own practice. BLIA members believe that these are the methods that will help Buddhists befriend all, and help broaden the views of individuals around the world. To Fo Guang Shan Buddhists, this is a modern presentation of traditional Buddhism. Hsing Yun has interpreted and changed numerous Buddhist traditions in order to suit the needs of modern society. One simple example of this is the use of music among BLIA members. In Chinese Buddhist history, Yu Shan Buddhist music and verses (along with dancing and gestures) aided people in bringing joy to their worship. Today, Fo Guang Shan and BLIA teach devotees to use Buddhist music and dancing to praise the Buddha and the bodhisattvas. As I have seen in my temple visits, today's audiences appreciate the harmony that is brought through the use of traditional music and dance in Buddhist practice.

The Vancouver International Buddhist Progress Society

After retiring from the position of abbot at Fo Guang Shan in Taiwan, Venerable Master Hsing Yun began to travel and preach to the world. It is his belief that Buddhism should move beyond the isolation of the mountain and forest, and beyond the front gate of the temple. He believes that Buddhism should take an aggressive role in the rebuilding of the spirit and ethnicity of not only the Chinese culture and community, but also cultures and communities around the world (anon., n.d.#5: 1). Consequently, on July 28th, 1991 Hsing Yun inaugurated the Vancouver chapter of BLIA. The construction of the Richmond temple (the International Buddhist Progress Society) was completed in January 1994, and the office of the BLIA Vancouver Chapter was moved to the same location. The Third General Conference of BLIA World Headquarters was held at the Richmond temple from September 23rd to 27th, 1994, with dignitaries from all levels of the local government present at the ceremony. Three thousand representatives participated in the event, and the success of the conference established the Vancouver chapter as the largest charitable and humanitarian religious organization in the community (anon., n.d.#5: 1).

I found the Vancouver chapter of BLIA in the middle of downtown Richmond, in the Radisson Hotel's President Plaza, attached to a large shopping mall. Given his international goals, Hsing Yun certainly chose the best site for the first Canadian chapter of his organization. The chapter is located in the busiest international port in Canada, near both an Asian community center and the Vancouver International Airport. The temple "grounds" (an entire floor of the building) include the Fo Guang Shan Bookstore, which offers various Buddhist cassette tapes, CD's, books, and souvenirs, and a traditional Tea House. The bookstore and Tea House are completely run by volunteers.

The Main Shrine of this temple looks a world away from the building it is housed in. While the outside of the temple is every bit a modern building, the Main Shrine is decorated in the traditional Chinese-style, similar to Buddhist temples around the world. Here members pay respects to the Seven Tathagatas, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva, and the Buddha. All visitors and members are welcome to participate in a variety of dharma functions and Buddhist lectures that are offered here. Jane Yu, a member of the Vancouver chapter, was kind enough to give me a tour of the facilities before our interview, and I was amazed at how quickly the atmosphere changed from a busy mall to a quiet Chinese temple.

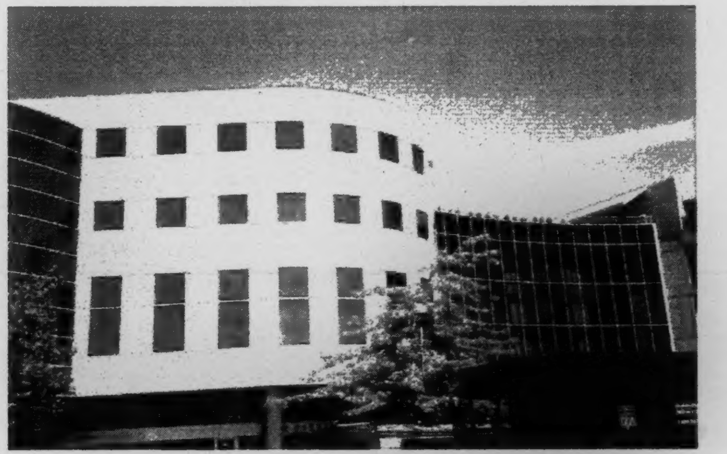

Figure 4.16: The Vancouver International Buddhist Progress Society

The facilities include a dining hall that offers free vegetarian meals to all members and visitors, as well as a large library that is open to the public for reading, copying sutras, and meditation. The library has over ten thousand volumes of Buddhist books (which include a large variety of English titles) [anon., n.d.#6: 1]. Also contained within the library are a variety of English and Chinese video and cassette tapes. In addition to these facilities, the temple includes thirty classrooms for the large selection of Buddhist (and non-Buddhist) classes that are offered by BLIA volunteers. A few of the classes that are offered by the temple include sutra copying classes, language classes in Japanese, Cantonese, and English, classes on Chinese knots, tea art, Chinese medicine, and flower arranging. There are also Sunday school classes, monthly study groups, boy scouts, martial arts, and dance classes offered. Obviously the latter group of classes is geared towards educating the younger generation, thus recruiting members while they are young and providing a safe outlet for area youth. Further to this, the classes provide a service to the Chinese/Taiwanese community by supporting the local youth and maintaining ethnic solidarity while encouraging religious propagation. There was a martial arts class in progress while I was there, and the room was filled to its capacity of thirty people. In addition, the Institute of Buddhist Studies (contained within the temple) offers introductory lectures on sutras, a Saturday dharma course, and an English Buddhism class in basic and intermediate levels.

Jane also explained to me that in order to develop culture as a bridge between the Western public and the Buddhist community, the Vancouver International Buddhist Progress Society has established the Buddha's Light College Society. This group holds regular courses on Calligraphy of Sutra, Ladies Buddhist Practice Workshop, Art of Chinese Knots, Vegetarian Cookery, Chinese Tea Appreciation, Phonetic Study, English as a Second Language, Vocalist Study, Tai-chi Chuan, and Exercise Dancing of Yuanji. When I asked Jane how these courses and the Society differed from the general courses that were offered by the temple, she explained that the group is more of a formal organization with the same members attending and volunteering in a variety of activities. The courses that are offered by the temple itself, on the other hand, are attended less frequently and with fewer numbers. The other difference between the two types of classes is that those offered by the Society are advertised to the general public in an effort to reach beyond BLIA members. The average attendance for these classes range from ten to twenty people and, according to Jane, attendance is fairly consistent. This notwithstanding I would question the success of such classes at building bridges outside of the Asian community. While there may have been non-members attending the classes, there were no non-Asians. Jane (after much hesitation) did confirm that while they have had a few curious Westerners attend the odd class, they have had little interest from the larger Vancouver community: "But I'm sure the classes will catch on soon. They're very interesting and I know many Canadians who would like to come. They will soon and then more will come" (pers. comm., Jane, June 14, 2002).

Fifty to sixty members attend services in the Main Shrine on a daily basis, while hundreds attend on the weekends. Like many Buddhist temples in both the East and the West, the Vancouver chapter finds that most of its members are Chinese women who are middle aged and older. I spoke to Man Jin on two occasions (one of the temple nuns), and she explained that when she was a nun at a BLIA temple in Taiwan she saw a similar phenomenon among temple members. According to Master Man Jin:

> I believe the reason behind female attendance to be based on women's greater capacity for compassion and patience. Women are more likely to become Buddhist because they will feel a need and importance for it – men are too busy with work to be bothered with religion. Young people, too, are too busy to be bothered with Buddhism. Also, young people today do not have the wisdom needed to understand the sutras. That is why we offer fun classes for them to join and socialize in. Maybe then they will slowly begin to understand the importance of our organization and of Buddhism (pers. comm., June 14, 2002).

Man Jin is forty-six years old, and she has been a nun at the Vancouver temple since she arrived in Canada from Taiwan five years ago. She was a nun in Taiwan for fourteen years before she came to Canada, and in that capacity learned to speak English and began to study the Buddhist sutras in English as well as in Chinese. Man Jin explained to me that while they are making efforts to localize Buddhism, they have had few new converts since their inception. Consequently, there are few young members at the temple (and those who are members have joined due to the efforts of the Youth Group, which currently has thirty members), and this chapter has only one Caucasian member. The classes that are run by the temple are offered partially as a means to improve these numbers. Currently, the members of the Vancouver temple are for the most part Cantonese with a few Mandarin members, and no Vietnamese, Japanese, or other Asian members.

The members of the Vancouver Buddha's Light International Association participate in a variety of volunteer and fund-raising activities. For instance, members participate in blood donation in conjunction with the Canadian Red Cross Association (members contribute once a month). Similarly, members visit the home of the aged once a week, in order to expound on the spirit of loving the elders of other families as if they are your own. BLIA volunteers also participate in charitable fundraising activities, such as The Big Bike Ride to support the British Columbia and Yukon Heart and Stroke Foundation (anon., n.d.#5: 2). According to Jane, this is an activity that the BLIA Youth Group organizes and volunteers in. This particular chapter also makes winter donations of food and clothing, which is delivered by volunteers to relief organizations and food banks. In order to "enhance the spiritual fulfillment" of BLIA members, well-known artists and specialists are invited to display their work and give lectures at the Temple (pers. comm., Man Jin, June 17, 2002). Seminars and lectures are also scheduled regularly to increase the understanding of the religion for lay people and community members. In addition, BLIA choirs, craftsman competitions, vegetarian cookery competitions, photography courses, and so on, are held year round. Through participation in such activities BLIA members are encouraged to learn the spirit of humanistic Buddhism (anon., n.d.#5: 3). This lofty goal notwithstanding, BLIA members also use these activities to bring word of their organization to non-members, often speaking at length about Buddhism and Hsing Yun's teachings when visiting the elderly, donating blood, or attending lectures.

Man Jin explained that the objective of BLIA is to make the Buddha's teachings and the ideals of their organization easily accessible to all people: "we educate and preach to all people the importance of spiritual living, compassion, and harmony" (pers. comm., June 17, 2002). Hsing Yun's "message of compassion" has led to the creation of the Buddha's Light Recitative Group, which upon request will assist in funeral, marriage, and other similar events for members. BLIA members also hold a Charity Bazaar every May, in order to celebrate the Buddha's birthday, Mother's Day, and the International Buddha's Light Day. As with the Association's efforts in countries such as the United States and Taiwan, Vancouver members are carrying out Hsing Yun's teachings of compassion and sacrifice while meeting the modern demands of society.

On my second visit to the temple, I sat down with six women who were in the large kitchen preparing the vegetarian meal. With Hsing Yun's teachings in hand I asked the women what their views were on compassion, sacrifice, and Heaven and the Hell realms. There was a consensus among the women on the topics, many of whom could quote Hsing Yun's teachings from memory. On how such teachings effected their daily lives, one woman had this to say: "Hsing Yun teaches us about the Buddha's views on compassion and we try and live these teachings every day". In response to my questions about specific volunteer work, the women looked at each other quickly and she continued, "well, we all have families to take care of and many of us work outside of the home. And Hsing Yun teaches that compassion begins at home…but we all try and volunteer now and then, like here, making the lunch. We take turns. And we attend services as often as we can…the younger people come to study groups and meetings very often [she shrugs], we do what we can" (pers. comm., anon., June 17, 2002).

As with his teachings of compassion, the Vancouver chapter of BLIA has made efforts to continue Hsing Yun's goal of reaching out to the local community through a variety of recruitment strategies. One of the results of such efforts is Buddhism on television in Canada. As with members in the United States and Taiwan, BLIA is making an effort in Canada to modernize Buddhism in order to recruit Western members. The short program of "Hsing Yun Dharma Talks" is broadcast in the evenings Monday through Friday on cable television stations across Canada.[49] Similarly, on March 29th, 2002, a tea reception was hosted at the Vancouver temple by Venerable Yi-Hong (one of the other five nuns that live in residence at the temple) on behalf of the International Buddhist Progress Society and BLIA. The event was organized in order to invite Malcolm Brodie, the mayor of Richmond, his wife, and Linda Barnes, a city councilor of Richmond.

According to the article on the event that appeared in the *Buddha's Light Newsletter*, the mayor said: "I didn't realize there's a temple here, not until a few weeks ago". Mayor Brodie was especially interested and impressed by the extent to which the educational realm of BLIA has extended its reach (as far as South Africa and other corners of the world) [anon., 2002: 5]. Yi-Hong commented that this was possible because they are following Hsing Yun's teachings of Humanistic Buddhism, and his guiding principle that things should be done not only among humans but also to benefit them: "we built this temple, not because of our own desires, but because people need it". Mayor Brodie and Master Yi-Hong agreed that the similarities between Richmond and the temple are their efforts at increasing volunteer networks and helping all communities and ethnic groups work as a team (anon., 2002: 5). Such public efforts notwithstanding, it is the nuns and administrators who volunteer and recruit on a large scale, while the laity and lower ranked members focus on smaller details such as reciting the BLIA verse on a daily basis, attending services as often as possible, and joining the odd class or reading group.

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[49] Although this program is advertised as being broadcast on cable, it in fact can only be found through satellite television.

Of the twenty-five lay members I spoke with in Vancouver over the course of June 2002, August 2003, and November 2003, eighteen said they recited the BLIA verse at least twice a day. The eight Youth Group members said they have attended at least one class at the temple, and all made daily efforts to learn more about Buddhism and Hsing Yun's teachings. Of the nine study group members I spoke with (seven of whom were men), six agreed that attending services every day was as important as volunteering within temple activities, and all believed Hsing Yun's teachings were a representation of the correct manner of leading a compassionate life, thus being reborn into Heaven. Of these twenty-five lay members, however, only two could name situations were they had reached out to or recruited from the non-Asian community. Furthermore, no members could remember using BLIA cards to recognize the important occasions in their lives, nor could anyone recall making an effort to contact other members at least once a month as Hsing Yun has required in his teachings. As one lay member explained it, "we all work hard to lead a compassionate life and follow Hsing Yun and the Buddha's teachings…we all believe that Hsing Yun's efforts at standardization are necessary to run such a large organization, but some of his teachings are more important than others in our daily lives" (pers. comm., anon., Aug. 28, 2003).

This being said, all twenty-five members agreed that membership in the Buddha's Light International Association has provided them with social and economic opportunities in Vancouver that they might otherwise not have had. The classes and groups provided members with job opportunities, the ability to spend time with their teenage children, travel opportunities to BLIA conferences, emotional and financial support, and so on.[50] It appears from my research that in Vancouver Hsing Yun's efforts at building bridges within the Western community is less successful on an individual, daily basis. While nuns, administrators, and higher ranked members continued his efforts at recruiting Westerners, the laity as a whole uses their membership as a means of increasing ethnic solidarity and strengthening ties within their own community. Many had vague ideas regarding what they should be doing in order to recruit new members (such as joining the organization in groups of three or volunteering for charity Bazaars), but few if any followed through with such efforts. The nuns and administrators that I spoke with, however, had a different understanding of Hsing Yun's teachings and what is expected of members of the Buddha's Light International Association.

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[50] Unlike Hsing Yun's strict teachings on lending money to other members, many of the men and women I spoke to admitted to borrowing or lending money, often in order to take care of sick family members or because they had family or friends who recently emigrated to Canada.

During my interviews with Jane Yu for instance, I learned that she had personally recruited a number of BLIA members. Through the encouragement of Jane, a number of her female friends attended a few of the classes that are offered by the temple, and later joined the Buddha's Light College Society. Jane is thirty-nine years old, and she has lived in Vancouver for almost fifteen years. She came to Canada from Hong Kong with her husband and their three children. Jane's husband is a businessman and her children go to local Vancouver schools (both her husband and her children are members of BLIA), and Jane herself works part-time as a BLIA administrator. When I asked Jane why she became a member of BLIA, she explained that when she and her husband came to Canada they were already Buddhist, so it was natural to look for a new temple to join. At first, the two were members of a smaller, local temple, but eventually the couple heard about the inauguration of a new chapter of the International Buddhist Progress Society (an organization that they had formally heard of): "[my husband and I] remembered how popular the group was in Asia…there was only one temple in Hong Kong, but many in Taiwan where my husband's family lives. It made sense to take a look…and once we saw how much good the volunteers were doing…and all they were planning to do…we had to join" (pers. comm., June 14, 2002).

Both Jane and Man Jin argued that it was the responsibility of all BLIA members to follow all of Hsing Yun's teachings since his goal was to spread the dharma to communities around the world. Neither woman believed the organization should be used solely to strengthen the Chinese community and thought that this was simply a byproduct of the classes and services that were offered. As Man Jin explained, "standardization is the only way to run an organization this large. The clothing, the ranks…these are all things that are necessary to ensure the promotion of Hsing Yun's teachings in a proper manner. Hsing Yun provides his followers with careful instructions on how to conduct their daily lives in order to live Humanistic Buddhism and bring compassion to the world. This is our first priority" (pers. comm., Aug. 28, 2003). Jane Yu later agreed, explaining that members usually began by adjusting their daily lives to Hsing Yun's teachings, only later focusing on larger efforts such as volunteering and recruiting. That being said, of the men and women I spoke with, over half have been members of BLIA for at least ten years – and as we have already seen, few spend time volunteering and recruiting.

After one of our initial meetings Jane invited me to the "Blessing Ceremony", which is held every month on the 1st and 15th day of the Chinese lunar calendar. The ceremony is performed in order to achieve the spiritual transformation of every person. I also attended one of the regular Dharma Functions that are held every Sunday (the temple also conducts the "Great Compassion Ceremony" and the "Eight Precepts Ceremony" regularly throughout the year). The Blessing Ceremony began at 10:00am, and lasted for two hours (at which point a vegetarian meal was offered). As with most Buddhist ceremonies, this one began with music – the sound of bells, drums, and the "wooden fish" (a Buddhist percussion instrument). The few hundred members that were present were made up of mostly middle-aged women in robes, yet there were a few men there, as well as a few younger members in street clothes (signaling that they had yet to take refuge and become Buddhist).

The chanting began immediately, and with the help of small prayer books the members continued chanting in unison at various speeds for almost two hours. Offerings were made during this time of both incense and fruit (oranges, apples, papaya, and watermelon) – the incense was brought forward by ten members while the others continued to chant, and the fruit was brought forward by four other members.[51] Near the end of the service, the entire group began to walk in a carefully choreographed manner while they continued to chant. The Abus performing the ceremony led half of the group in one direction, and the female member playing the wooden fish led the other half of the group in the opposite direction. According to Jane, the ceremony was successful because prayers were made to request blessings for the members present and for the community at large.

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[51] There are often simply too many members at the temple to allow for individual offerings. Consequently, members take turns volunteering to make the offerings.

The Sunday Dharma Function was surprisingly similar to the Blessing Ceremony. The only obvious differences were that it was shorter in duration, no offerings of fruit were made, and there were no walking prayers. The music and chanting, however, sounded remarkably similar. When I asked Master Yi-Hong about this later, she said that many of the prayers were the same during the ceremonies because they are asking bodhisattvas like Guan Yin to bless them and their ancestors.[52] These two ceremonies are representative of the larger services that are held by the Vancouver chapter. Attendance is always high and the ceremonies are the same whether taking place in Vancouver, California, or Taiwan. This is where Hsing Yun's standardization is the most visible, and may again be causing some difficulty in transmitting BLIA to the West. Most non-Asian Westerners are unfamiliar with practices involving prayers to the ancestors (something that is originally Confucian in origin), and may be uncomfortable with such procedures, deciding instead on less traditional forms of Buddhist practice. All available BLIA members join in such ceremonies, while wearing the correct clothing and performing the correct chants and steps. Many have the chants memorized, and many more have attended hundreds of such ceremonies in both Vancouver and China or Taiwan. It was evident from the clothing and robes that there were few new members, fewer high ranking members, and many more low ranking members. According to the men and women I spoke with at the vegetarian lunch, even those who cannot attend regular services try and take time to attend these large ceremonies. Nevertheless, as the ceremonies often take place during the weekday, few men between the ages of twenty and sixty-five attend on a regular basis, finding it easier to attend the study groups or simply observe the occasions at home.

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[52] As Master Yi-Hong is the Abus of the temple she rarely has free time and was unable (or unwilling) to sit down with me for more than a few minutes. Instead, she encouraged me to speak to Man Jin.

Edmonton International Buddhist Progress Society

Like the Vancouver International Buddhist Progress Society, the Edmonton temple was established in 1994. According to one of the temple organizers, however, this chapter has experienced almost no growth since that time. As Man Jin told me during our interview in Vancouver, the Edmonton chapter of BLIA does not have the space or the ability to offer the large range of classes that the Vancouver temple does. The temple in Edmonton is located downtown, across from the Eaton's center and near the bus station. It is housed among a long strip of businesses (attached to the Spaghetti Factory), and thus does not have nearly the room the Vancouver temple does. Nevertheless, the Edmonton chapter has organized its space well. While it has only a few small rooms over the three floors, there is space for a library, a meditation hall, a small meeting room, and a few small offices on the top floor. The first floor houses the Main Shrine, which is used for Buddhist ceremonies, and a small area to sell books and souvenirs. The basement contains a large room that is used as both a meeting room and a dining hall. The basement also contains a kitchen and a small room used for the Youth Group and for Sunday School (and for yoga classes).

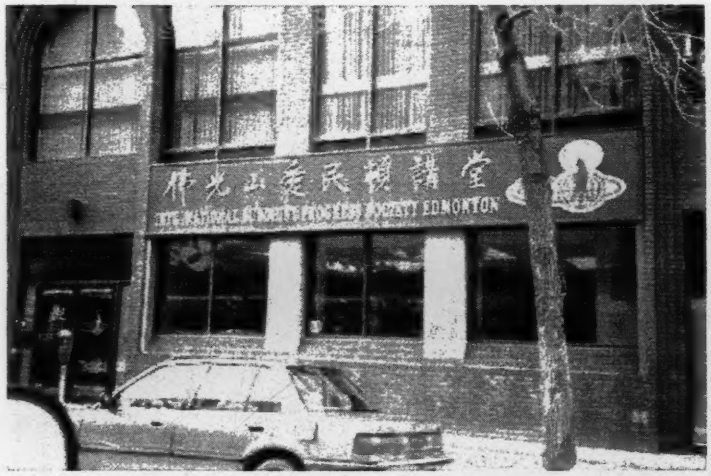

Figure 4.17: The Edmonton International Buddhist Progress Society

Regardless of their perceived lack of space, however, the Edmonton temple does organize birthday and Halloween parties, which are held in an effort to bring a few

Western traditions to Buddhism in order to attract all ages to the temple and have some measure of influence over the local youth. In addition to adding a few local traditions, the temple continues to perform Chinese practices in an effort to carry on the Chinese Buddhist culture. There are celebrations for the New Year, an August Repent Service, and Wesak Day (the celebration of the birth of the Buddha). Membership in the Edmonton chapter is similar to the Vancouver chapter, the main difference being Edmonton's significantly lower numbers. Within their two hundred members, however, most are Chinese immigrants from Vietnam, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Taiwan. Like the Vancouver chapter, this temple has one Caucasian member. The single nun that resides at the temple has arrived recently from Malaysia, and while she speaks both Mandarin and Cantonese, she speaks almost no English.

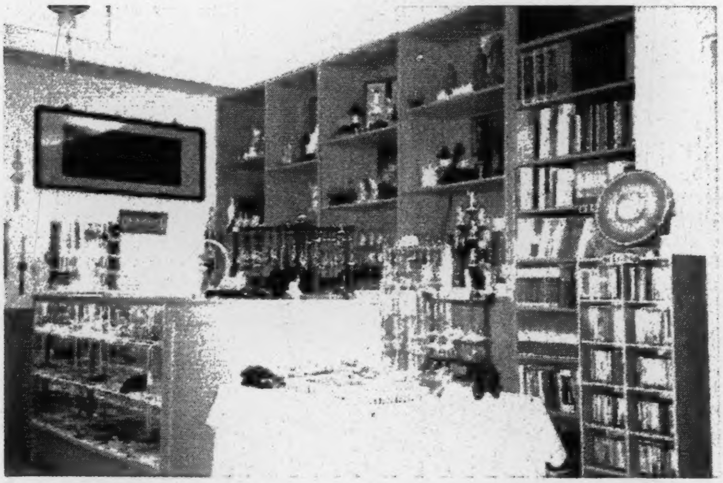

Figure 4.18: The Temple Souvenir Store

I was invited to participate in their Sunday ceremony and the vegetarian meal that followed. I did so on eight occasions, and while the service never changed, my continued participation eventually lead to the ability to take photographs of the service (something that is usually denied) and meet some of the participants. The Sunday service begins at 10:00am, and continues until 12:15pm, with a fifteen minute break at 11:00am. While the majority of the hundred or so members that attend this service arrive on time, a few members do trickle in over the course of the service. As in Vancouver, the majority of those in attendance were middle-aged women in robes. Nevertheless, most Sunday services included five or six men and nine or ten young people. Also as in Vancouver, the service begins with music played by the nun and another member of the temple. The majority of the service is group chanting and prostrations – the chanting involving prayers of various length and speed. Before the 11:00am break, the chanting changes to prayers that are begun by the nun and then answered by the group. The only other change is the offerings of food that are made before lunch is served. Two young female members bring a small amount of each dish in order to offer it to the buddhas and bodhisattvas before the members begin their meal.

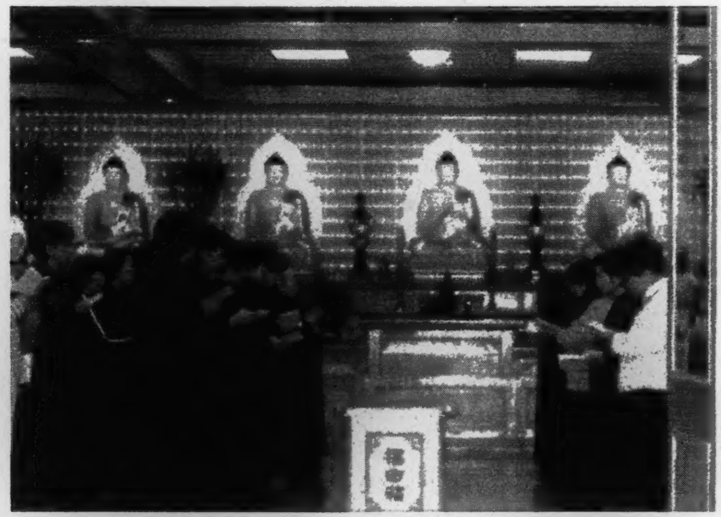

Figure 4.19: Sunday Morning Ceremony: Chanting

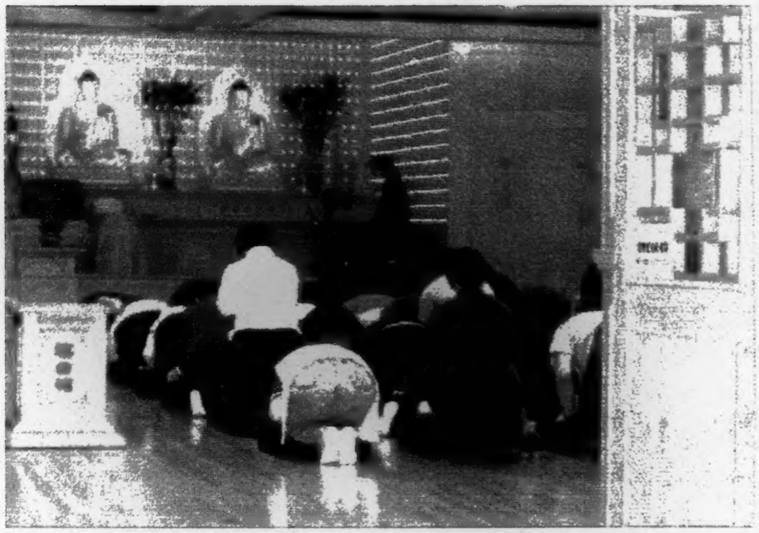

Figure 4.20: Sunday Morning Ceremony: Prostrations

One of the temple members to whom I spoke at length was Andy, an administrator for the Edmonton temple. Andy does not see Humanistic or Fo Guang Shan Buddhism as 'sects', but rather as means of spreading the dharma in a modern way in order to gain the benefits of the Buddha's original teachings. According to Andy, Buddhism must be practised and taught as a continuous spectrum (he drew me a picture to demonstrate this). He explained that Hsing Yun applies different methods of teaching the dharma according to where a person is in life. "As a person's way of thinking and culture evolves, so must the ways of teaching Buddhism…therefore, there must be modernization as Buddhism is spread to the West, and this should be done without sacrificing the original teachings" (pers. comm., May 30, 2002). Andy believes that television programs, newspapers, study groups, and other such efforts are genuine ways at promoting Hsing Yun's teachings and Humanistic Buddhism. "The more open we are at methods of education, the more likely we are to reach new people. It's true that we haven't had much success in Edmonton, but there is time" (pers. comm., May 30, 2002).

Andy is a single man in his forties who immigrated to Edmonton from Hong Kong almost twenty years ago. He has been working for BLIA since its inauguration in Edmonton, and was one of its original members. In our discussions, Andy explained the urgent need for the modernization of Buddhism because of the numerous barriers involved in studying traditional sutras:

> Our goal is to cultivate Buddhism as human beings in the human realm…this is all according to the Buddha's original teachings… only in the human realm can you reach enlightenment, because you must start with where you are. We must modernize without sacrificing the original sutras – yet people today are too busy to take the necessary time to understand the complicated sutras. It is because of this that the dharma must be modernized.
> (pers. comm., April 4, 2002).

This goal of modernization is the reason behind the study group that Andy leads, as well as the Sunday School and the Youth Group. It is a means of making Buddhism both easier to understand and more interesting to those who might otherwise not take the trouble to study the religion. While only a handful of members take the time to attend groups for further Buddhist study, the opportunity to do so remains. When I attended the study group, the same five people attended each time. Similarly, the same group of young people came to the meetings of the Youth Group (the Sunday School just began, so there were only six children present). As in Vancouver, not all members find the time to attend extra classes and meetings, but those who do attend feel sure that other members will soon follow.

Andy introduced me to Paul Sussman, the only Caucasian member of the Edmonton temple, and he and I spoke on three occasions. Paul is a well-known psychologist here in Edmonton, and he has been a member of BLIA for three years. As he explains, the temple offers a welcoming atmosphere that is absolutely inclusive, and it is because of this that he has never felt like an outsider. This feeling of welcome overcame any language barriers that existed (and still exist) between Paul and other members of the temple. Paul does chant in Mandarin, and he told me that while chanting it is unnecessary and inappropriate to try and understand the meaning behind the words intellectually. When he has questions about the meaning of Buddhist sutras, Paul attends the monthly study groups (which are held in English). Paul is originally from the United States, where his parents were former religious practitioners (he has a Jewish father and a Baptist mother) who advocated for the dissolution of all religions. He explained that he "went through all the Middle Eastern Religions…until BLIA appeared to [him] when walking to work one day" (pers. comm., June 3, 2002). Paul took the five precepts shortly after he joined the organization, and is now one of the committee members that coordinates Buddhist events. He agrees that it takes a great deal of work to be a member of BLIA and to be a Humanistic Buddhist. Along with attending meetings, Paul writes for the *Merit Times* once a month and performs various volunteer activities when he has the time.

Paul joined the temple because the timing was right for him, while twenty-two of the twenty-six Chinese members that I spoke to in Edmonton joined because of the networking opportunities that were available through membership. The other four members joined because their friends and family were already members, and the nun became a member because she was 'called to Buddhism'. Six of the Edmonton members (including Andy and Paul) see the vision of BLIA as a bridge between the temple and the local community. As one woman explained it, "through open and frank discussions of Buddhism there will be increased understanding among members and an exchange of ideas. It doesn't matter if this is done through study groups, volunteer work, regular attendance of services, or special ceremonies…it all leads to an increased understanding of Hsing Yun's teachings" (pers. comm., anon., Nov. 27, 2003).

In their celebrations of Wesak Day on April 29th 2001, this temple welcomed David Kilgour, Member of Parliament for Edmonton Southeast. In his speech for the event, Kilgour commented that "Wesak Day is one of the holiest days for Buddhists across the world…all followers come together and celebrate not only the Buddha's birthday, but also his enlightenment and achievement of Nirvana". Kilgour goes on to contend that while we can trace Buddhism to six hundred years prior to Christ, it would be a mistake to characterize Buddhism as solely a religion. Instead, Buddhist teachings have emerged as a philosophy, and as a sense of spirituality and way of life for people around the world (www.david-kilgour.com/, 2003). With regard to Canada and local communities, Kilgour commented that where diversity and inclusion are becoming "what the world knows best", tolerance and respect for one another is prevalent, and all Buddhists have a key role to play in promoting these concepts. Although Buddhists are few in number in Canada, the community has increased in importance within our society: "[the Buddhist] faith holds at its core teachings that we can all live by [the Buddha's] example and way of life...[Buddhism] represents some of the basic values by which we all live" (www.david-kilgour.com/, 2003). Like the Richmond mayor's visit to the BLIA temple in Vancouver, David Kilgour was invited to participate in a Buddhist event in order to make the religious group more visible within the local community. While increased visibility of the organization within the Edmonton community has had little success, administrators continue to schedule study groups and smaller events in the hope that eventually this will change.

Buddhism places a great deal of emphasis on wisdom (*prajna*) and, according to Hsing Yun, this should be a primary focus for BLIA members. The Buddhist sutras explain that wisdom is the most important of the six paramitas, and it guides the other five toward perfection.[53] Hsing Yun (2000b: 2) writes that wisdom comes from experiences in everyday life, and that apart from everyday life there is no wisdom (this is illustrated at the beginning of the Diamond Sutra). BLIA and its followers advocate a 'living' Buddhism, and it is through this that they guide people around the world to find wisdom in their daily lives. The organization encourages husbands and wives to attend dharma functions together, they hold activities to bring parents and children together, and they emphasize the importance of harmony in family and other relationships. These relationships are all seen to be in the spirit of prajna. In fact, in Edmonton many of the study groups are organized around influencing younger members. Buddhism is discussed in a manner that relates to modern Western trends. Wisdom is transformed into discussions of movies and music, or personal issues relating to school and socialization among teenagers.

Yet it is clear that these activities are not having the impact on families that Hsing Yun and his followers had hoped. While some young people join youth groups that are organized by the temples in Vancouver and Edmonton, few do so because of an interest in Buddhism. The overwhelming consensus is that young people join because of pressures from their parents, or as a means to socialize with their friends. Similarly, in North America, there is often only one Buddhist in a family. For example, a wife may join a temple because she has the time, and while she may bring her family to dharma functions, they rarely become Buddhists themselves. Many members were hesitant to admit this, but after some effort on my part more than half of the people I spoke to in Edmonton and Vancouver agreed that it is extremely difficult to keep their children in the organization. Children and teenagers can be encouraged to join youth groups, attend services and parties, but few take an interest beyond socializing and most drift away after a few years. It appears that in both cities, reaching out to younger generations is almost as difficult as reaching out to the Western community.

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[53] The Six Paramitas (Six Perfections) practised by enlightened beings, are: generosity, upholding the precepts, patience, diligence, meditation, and wisdom.

I spoke to one young boy, Justin, who was doing his homework in the basement of BLIA's Edmonton temple while his mother was participating in the Sunday service. Fourteen-year-old Justin told me that he became a member of BLIA three years ago because his mother encouraged him to attend services. Justin, whose friends are for the most part Christian, is uninterested in Buddhism or the activities that BLIA offers: "I'm too busy with my homework to bother with Buddhism", hence he rarely attends any of the services. Justin's brother, on the other hand, is a member of the youth group that I visited, and is quite dedicated to the organization. Their parents are from Malaysia and China, and while the boys were born in Canada, their mother and father immigrated to the country twenty years ago. Justin is like many teenage boys – interested in socializing and school and uninterested in adding religious activities to his list of "diversions".

The Edmonton Youth Group has thirty members who meet in the basement of the temple. The group began in 1995, with ten members, a few of who were international university students who were already familiar with BLIA. Other members of the Youth Group were children of parents who were attending services at the temple. Youth Group members range in age from fourteen years old to twenty-two years of age, although many of the younger children became members simply because their siblings were or because their parents are members of BLIA. These younger members told me that they joined because they can visit with friends in a manner that their parents approve of. The older members of the Youth Group, on the other hand, are the organizers of the meetings and the fund-raising activities. They are also the members who make a point to attend regularly. Some of these older members also organized a trip to the Sixth Annual BLIA Executive Conference that was held in Los Angeles in 2002 (funds were raised through bottle drives, car washes, and dances).

The Youth Group meets every second Friday for casual dharma classes. Here they (ideally) read from Hsing Yun's texts or from the *Merit Times*, and then discuss what they learned. I attended two of these meetings, and while the first meeting did involve a discussion of Buddhist teachings (for about thirty minutes), it slowly became a discussion of the next dance that they had planned – a dinner and swing-dance to raise funds for an upcoming trip. The second meeting turned into a screening for the movie "What Dreams May Come" with Robin Williams. Members of the Youth Group explained that the movie related to Buddhism because of its subject matter: the importance of compassion. It was during this second meeting that I had the opportunity to interview six of the members. While many were too shy to speak to me (or too busy with their friends), these six were willing to answer my questions. One of the leaders of the Youth Group was particularly helpful. Nathan is twenty-one years old, and he became a member of the Edmonton temple when he was a teenager (he was one of the original members of the Youth Group). Nathan admitted that while he did join BLIA at his mother's insistence, he now took Buddhism very seriously and was very proud to be a member of the organization.

Nathan explained that most Youth Group members are first generation immigrants. This is different from Vancouver's Youth Group where almost all members are international university students (and thus, in their terms, more "worldly"). According to Nathan, it is due to their immigration status that Edmonton members have created a group that is a hybrid of Canadian and Chinese culture. Members plan activities around what the teenagers are interested in at the time, and this often means concerts or movies. The group does participate in volunteer work, but not to the level that the Tzu Chi Youth Group does. This group is based more on philosophy than action, while the Tzu Chi group puts charity work above Buddhist teachings. Yet the Edmonton Youth Group does participate in one-time events such as the Great Human Race. According to Nathan, there are about seventeen truly committed members in their Youth Group, and these are the members who participate in volunteer events.

When I asked Nathan how the outreach towards non-Asian young people was working out, he told me that "it isn't". To Nathan, the answer lies in adapting Buddhism to an even greater extent: "with the cultural barrier that exists between whites and

Chinese…there is nothing interesting – no reason for them to join. Most westerners are more interested in Tibetan Buddhism because of movies and Richard Gere…we offer little of interest compared to that" (pers. comm., July 10, 2002). Like the Vancouver chapter, however, this temple is certainly trying. They are beginning first with Chinese youth, hoping that eventually their Western friends will be drawn in. While most members have been drawn to the organization by family commitments, socializing, or travel and job opportunities, Nathan believes the goals of BLIA are reaching out to the larger community first, strengthening ties within the community second. But as Nathan argues, they begin were they can.

An example of this is the first Sunday School that was offered by the temple (which I attended with my husband and children along for the ride). The four teachers present went through a great deal of trouble to make Buddhism both easy to understand and interesting for the children. There were six children in attendance (three boys and three girls), ages eight to thirteen – and my two boys who were three and five. In addition to the four teachers, there were three "aunties" who had volunteered to help. Andy and Nathan were two of the teachers present, and they took turns telling the children creative renditions of the Buddha's birth and enlightenment. The teachings were recounted in English, and the children took turns reading easy-to-understand versions of the sutras off the walls. For example, one young boy read the following scripture:

> May kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity pervade all Dharma realms.
> May all beings benefit from our blessing and friendship.
> May our ethical practice of Ch'an and Pure Land help us to realize equality and patience.
> May we undertake the Great Vows with humility and gratitude.

Later, all six of the children (mine were too shy) stood up and acted out the story of the Buddha's birth. The children had great fun doing this, and often erupted in peals of laughter. Finally, the group (my boys included) sang a song called "Harmonize":

> The time has come to realize
> Without world peace we can't survive
> Our past is one that's filled with war-
> Compassion is what we are looking for,

It fills me up with so much hope
To realize how beautiful
This world could be without anger,
Which drives us all against each other.
Let's promise to us, our hearts and souls,
With wisdom we can gain control.
That's why we sing this song to you,
Just don't lose faith we're here for you.
So hold on and harmonize all that is wrong
And work for a peace which is strong,
And gain some respect for this earth-
For all mankind we will serve.
Let's harmonize all that is wrong
And work for a peace which is strong,
And gain some respect for this earth-
For all of mankind we serve.

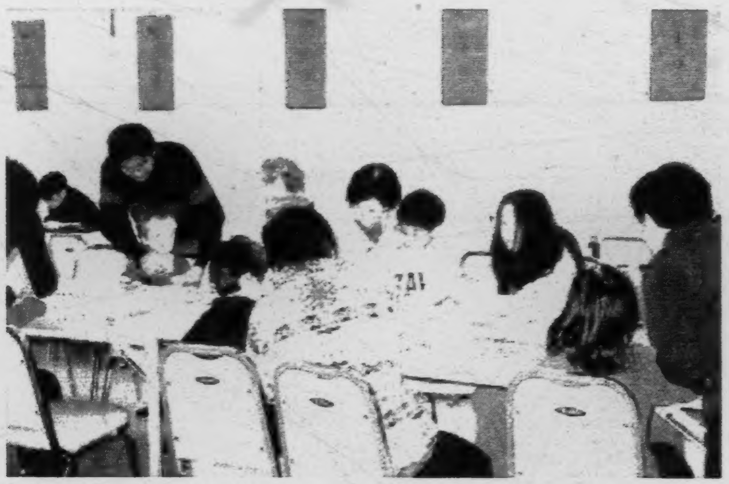

Figure 4.21: The First Sunday School Services

The Sunday School ran for the duration of the Sunday services, and just before it ended Andy gathered the children together in the dining hall to teach them Chinese calligraphy. The children had a lot of fun using paint brushes and ink to learn their Chinese characters. In general, it was clear that the first Sunday School meeting was a success, measured by the smiles on the children's faces and the fact that my older son asked to go back every Sunday. Nevertheless, when I checked back in November 2003, I learned that interest in the class had slowly declined and they had eventually moved the meetings to one Sunday a month. There is some hope that with new members there will be new interest in Sunday School, but until then the children who do attend services simply join their parents in the Main Shrine. As of yet, among members of the Edmonton Chapter of BLIA, the classes and meetings that are geared towards adult members have had more success in comparison to these services for children.

The International Buddhist Progress Society's study group is open to all members of the temple and the community. The group meets on the third Tuesday of every month, from 7:30pm to 9:30pm. While there is no schedule or agenda, and open discussion is welcome, the group does choose a chapter of Hsing Yun's to read in advance and then discuss. The same group of people came to each of the study groups that I attended – Andy, Paul, Kim, a middle-aged man, and a middle-aged woman. Andy led the discussion at each meeting, and often brought in the original Chinese text or sutra in order to compare it to the English version that the members were reading. The discussions during each of the meetings that I attended were based on chapters of Hsing Yun's text, *Lotus in a Stream*. The first three meetings covered topics that I have previously discussed in this thesis (the Four Noble Truths, Karma, the Five Precepts, and the Eight Fold Path) but the final meeting covered a topic that I was only slightly familiar with: Dependent Origination. This topic was seen as extremely important, so the group went fairly slowly over Hsing Yun's text.

Before we began the discussion of the new topic, Andy asked everyone how they felt about last month's discussion. At the end of the last meeting Andy had assigned the beginning of Hsing Yun's chapter on dependent origination. This first section relates to cause and effect, and how they are universal aspects of all phenomenon. Hsing Yun (2001b: 76) writes that there is no first cause, and no last effect – cause and effect are relative to each other and neither is absolute. He also writes that cause and effects persist over time, and are two sides of the same coin (if you intentionally perform an evil act, you will not reap a good reward). The group concluded that this relates to dependent origination because no thing or phenomenon arises out of nothing or exists alone. Phenomenon do not arise independently, but instead arise dependent on each other. Paul told the group that this makes emotions such as anger seem "irrelevant and stupid" – that such emotions are simply a waste of energy. Andy, on the other hand, said the section he read made him more aware of delusion, and that it was because of our last discussion that he finally realized that "growth means being grateful…never before could I see and feel it from the heart, I just echoed the words" (pers. comm., September, 2002).

In this text Hsing Yun explains that there are four conditions pertinent to dependent origination:

1. The causal condition – when the cause of a phenomenon is intrinsic to that phenomenon.
2. Condition without intervals – conditions that refer to conditions of the mind (careful scrutiny of mental conditions without intervals leads to great insight into the workings of karma and the human mind).
3. Conditional Conditions – all extrinsic conditions that have bearing on the mind intrinsic to the mind is eye consciousness, but without extrinsic form and light this consciousness will not function.
4. Other conditions (all other forms) – these assist the process of cause and effect, or simply do not hinder it (2001b: 81)

These four points were confusing to the members of the group, thus in order to discuss them they began at the beginning of the chapter and moved slowly through Hsing Yun's words. Andy told the group that they should always be mindful and aware – in meditation, in daily interaction, and so on. This is the "conditional conditions" that Hsing Yun writes about. As Andy explained it, "the more you study Buddhism, the more you realize the Buddha is talking about our minds…but because most don't have wisdom to understand this, Hsing Yun focuses on phenomenon and actions" (pers. comm., September, 2002). The middle-aged female member who was present explained that "all actions are driven by thoughts…so that is where intentions lie" (pers. comm., anon., 2002). During this discussion the other members simply listened and nodded their heads in agreement.

As the members of the group took turns reading and discussing the chapter, Andy frequently checked the Chinese texts that he had brought with him. When something was particularly confusing Paul would ask Andy to check the original script to see if it was clearer – or simply translated incorrectly. Through group discussion I learned that the other members saw the subjects of impermanence and selflessness as the most important points of the chapter. Impermanence, according to Hsing Yun (2001b: 84), is the reality that all phenomena change, and that nothing stays the same. Selflessness is the reality that all things are dependent on one another for their existence. According to Kim (whose comments were translated by Andy) only impermanence can give us hope, and knowing the reality of self-nature teaches us how to cooperate. While these concepts are extremely important to Buddhist philosophy, Andy argued that the most important concept to Buddhism is the concept of emptiness. This is the one concept that distinguishes Buddhism from all other religious philosophies.

As Andy argued, emptiness is one of the deepest words in Buddhism – a word that comes as close to describing reality as any word can. In Hsing Yun's own writings, he explains that emptiness is not a term of negation or pessimism. Rather, the phenomenal world of the senses depends on emptiness for its very existence. Understanding emptiness allows us to see beyond reality, beyond duality, and beyond all phenomenal distinctions: "emptiness teaches us to see through ourselves" (2001b: 94). Paul related this discussion to chaos theory, and the laws of cause and effect. He explained his comments through an example: "since everything is interconnected on a piece of cloth it is 'empty', the cloth has no reality in itself…without emptiness the world could not exist". Paul laughed then and said, "the world really does rotate around my naval…an idea that I was trying to discard" (he was referring to the theory that every point in the universe is the center of the universe). The middle-aged man (who rarely spoke during the meetings that I attended) commented that while we usually say there is a beginning and end to everything, now we are saying there is not. Again, everyone nodded their heads in agreement. Since it was almost 10:00 pm, the group slowly broke up after this final comment. The success of such study groups is that they allow members the opportunity to discuss teachings they do not understand, thus *correctly* promoting Hsing Yun's word and encouraging his followers to use Buddhism in their daily lives. This notwithstanding, because the group is offered only monthly and attended by the same group of people, it is difficult to adequately measure the success of the study group beyond these five individuals.

Discussion

Fo Guang Shan was established in 1967 and since its inception members have made an effort to reach out to people around the world, paying specific attention to building bridges between Asian and Western communities. Devotees base their practice of Humanistic Buddhism on emulating the buddhas and bodhisattvas of traditional Buddhism, and their vows include supporting the spread of Buddhism worldwide. My research has demonstrated that in Canada, however, very few members of BLIA devote their time to recruiting new members, preferring to spend their time on self-cultivation or socializing. Nevertheless, as a result of more than thirty years of effort by Hsing Yun, monks, nuns, and administrators, Fo Guang Shan has received recognition and respect among religious organizations around the world. In an effort to promote Humanistic Buddhism, Hsing Yun has met with other religious leaders, such as Cheng Yen, the Dalai Lama, and Pope John Paul II. Furthermore, in an effort to encourage Buddhist practice in everyday life, Hsing Yun has established summer camps, seminars, short-term monastic retreats, among other events. Such activities are geared at bringing Buddhism into the every-day life of BLIA members.

Unlike traditional monastic Buddhists, Hsing Yun has sought to involve the laity more deeply in Buddhist life, and in doing so frequently blurs the distinction between the clerical and lay realms. Thus, not only are lay people involved in the day-to-day operation of Fo Guang Shan in specific jobs as secretaries, janitors, hosts, and so on – but the temple also houses an order of lay female celibates as well (Jones, 1999: 197). In Canada, temple members explain that the International Buddhist Progress Society (the temple) and the Buddha's Light International Association (the organization) work together to spread the dharma to citizens around the world. Andy explained to me that because the nuns come from Taiwan, they do not understand the needs of the local Canadian community. Therefore, the nuns represent BLIA, and the local temple members represent the community. By working together the organization is better equipped to adapt Buddhism to meet the needs of today's society, drawing form both modernity and globalization. This is a unique form of Chinese Buddhism, and while Fo

Guang Shan does not qualify as a 'sect' in the traditional sense, the ideals and practices of the group are unique to it.

An educated, modern man, Hsing Yun frequently discusses the importance of modernity and globalization in his speeches and his writings. As Man Jin explained to me, historically, cultures developed through ancient wisdom and experience, yet when we look at the course of history it is clear that some cultures have not been able to adapt to the effects of globalization as well as others. Hsing Yun (2002a: 12) argues that both Buddhism and the world need modernization, and that strictly following tradition is neither right nor wrong, but that the best solution is to use the wisdom and experience of tradition to guide modern development. If both traditional and modern practices can work in harmony, then there may still be universal acceptance. It is BLIA's goal that through the development of community activities such as theirs, Buddhism will be introduced to new family members and their children. Through meditation sessions, pilgrimages, study groups, music and artistic design classes, etc., Humanistic Buddhism will become a thriving force within society. Thus, the Humanistic Buddhism of Fo Guang Shan focuses on the family because they hope that by emphasizing Buddhist education, they will pass their beliefs and practices to the next generation. Yet it is evident from the members that I spoke with that such recruitment tactics have been unsuccessful in Canada thus far. BLIA establishes many kindergartens, orphanages, day care centers, and Chinese schools around the globe, but it is only within Chinese communities that these are having an effect. Judith Nagata (1999: 241) has documented that many of these schools are attended by non-Asian families, but this is true in cities such as California, where many families seek a greater moral and ethical component than is normally available in public schools. The organization hopes that through education they can purify people's minds, re-establish morality, and promote ethics, thus emphasizing living the teachings of Humanistic Buddhism. Yet in Canada, the Buddha's Light International Association has experienced only small successes in their drive to bring Chinese Buddhism to non-Asian members of the younger generation.

The Buddha's Light International Association has made a calculated move towards forming an international community that transcends nationality, ethnicity, and traditions. Yet while the group is recognized around the world through its one hundred-thirty associations and one thousand sub-chapters, individual membership grows slowly in Western countries and 99% of Canadian followers are members of Asian communities. Moreover, the Buddha's Light International Association simply cannot compete with the Tzu Chi Foundation's four million members (having only one million members itself), yet Hsing Yun continues to inaugurate BLIA chapters across the globe, seeing success in cities like Vancouver, where membership has recently grown to 7000 members. Pursuing the philosophy "if we built it they will come", Hsing Yun's followers have no doubt that the organization will continue to grow and transform, eventually recruiting more members from non-Asian communities. To them, BLIA has achieved its goal of the internationalization of Buddhism, while continuing to use globalization and modernity to bring the religion into a new era.

In the present era, mass communication is readily available to people around the globe, and many people have the ability to travel freely to countries that until recently they had only heard about. The nuns that represent BLIA believe that Buddhism can break away from the past by "coming out of the forest and entering society" (Hsing Yun, 2002a: 32). In other words, in order to make Buddhism relevant to the needs of modern society, the religion cannot continue to focus its attention on ancient sutras and the ascetic life. As we saw from the spread of Buddhism two thousand years ago, it is a philosophy that does not shy away from change. By expanding the functions of temples, and serving the community through involvement with families, nations, and the world, BLIA members have made an effort to promote Humanistic Buddhism. They have worked to modernize and develop the literature of Buddhism in order to make it more widely accessible to communities around the world. Unlike Cheng Yen and members of the Tzu Chi Foundation, who believe daily compassion through charity and relief work come before difficult Buddhist study, Hsing Yun and his followers believe that prolonged study of Buddhist texts is the path to enlightenment and the spread of the dharma.

Judith Nagata (1999: 231) has argued that Fo Guang Shan and BLIA represent examples of a general globalizing trend of religions today. While it is true that BLIA demonstrates aspects of a globalizing religion in that members are aware of the importance of modernizing its established traditions, the success of Hsing Yun's efforts are still in their earliest phase. However, with its this-worldly social engagement and ecumenical co-operation, BLIA has made a purposeful effort to expand beyond its original home in Taiwan. Nagata (1999: 231) argues that the enlarged scope of religious pluralism and transnational religious connections has provided the conditions for the emergence of a global religious civil society. True, religious organizations like BLIA and the Tzu Chi Foundation have the unique ability to transcend the usual territorial boundaries created by the nation or state, the result of which includes taking on the new roles of successful business owner, political force, educator, and benefactor. Yet with the new roles that Hsing Yun has taken on in this massive undertaking, he has gradually become less of a Buddhist master and more of a high-powered executive. This is evident in both the financial success that his organization has had, and in the stringent guidelines and standardization that have been put down for his followers.[54] Furthermore, it is clear from the demanding guidelines that Hsing Yun puts forth in his writings that he expects his followers to acquiesce on many aspects of their lives. Hsing Yun argues that the aim of these procedures is to provide members with guidelines for daily activities, self-cultivation, and relationships with other members, yet the exacting methods of self-cultivation have been mistaken by some, for the systematic, methodical conditions of a cult. Hsing Yun has been charged by Jones (1999), with running his organization like the CEO of a fortune-500 company. Fellowship and approval are contingent on members adapting their current lives to the formula that has been created by Hsing Yun as founder and CEO.

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[54] See Appendix Six for information on the political scandal involving Hsing Yun and Former Vice President Al Gore. This scandal is demonstrative of Hsing Yun's role as CEO and political force, rather than Buddhist monk.

CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSIONS

Considerable variety is found within Chinese Buddhism in the West, with varying elements drawn from the national traditions of Taiwan, Burma, Vietnam, and Tibet. Most of these organizations serve ethnic Chinese exclusively, but a few also serve non-Asian members and participants. Many of these organizations are monastic in orientation, while others give free rein to the religious aspirations of the laity and have no monastic sangha at all. There are also important class variables at work: some temples serve working-class Chinese who live in urban Chinatowns, while others serve the needs of professionals, who are more likely to live in suburban communities (Seager, 1999: 160). Still other groups serve the needs of both the immigrant community and the general population within the United States and Canada. Groups such as the Compassionate Relief Tzu Chi Foundation and the Buddha's Light International Association, however, are examples of global Buddhist organizations that have managed to transcend these traditional classifications. Based out of Taiwan, these two organizations have drawn elements primarily from Chinese Buddhism, yet they have also adapted the Buddhist dharma to suit the needs of members who are living in the West. In addition, while both groups serve the needs of ethnic Chinese across the globe, their founders see no distinction between members of the local communities they settle in, and show no favoritism to members of their own ethnic group. Finally, while BLIA is monastic in orientation and the Tzu Chi Foundation is not, both organizations serve working-class members, professionals, immigrant communities, ethnic Chinese converts, and the general population.

It is as a consequence of such adaptations and the willingness of these groups to open their doors to all potential members, that Cheng Yen and Hsing Yun have globalized their organizations without the loss of Chinese members and their primary traditions, and while creating and maintaining ethnic identity and solidarity within communities around the world. In addition, because of their unique perspectives on Buddhist philosophy and practice, these two organizations have members in both the West and Taiwan who have overlapping membership. While exact numbers are not recorded, members of both the Tzu Chi Foundation and BLIA reported to me that it is prudent and desirable to maintain membership in both organizations. This feeling is primarily based on the differing emphases that Cheng Yen and Hsing Yun have placed on Buddhist practice. With Cheng Yen's focus on daily charity work and compassion, and Hsing Yun's emphasis on traditional Buddhist practices and philosophy, individuals are often drawn to a complimentary blending of memberships. Because BLIA has only vague guidelines regarding charity work, many followers turn to the Tzu Chi Foundation to fulfill their desire for generosity and compassion. Alternatively, since the Tzu Chi Foundation has no recognized sangha and does not provide its members with access to Buddhist ceremonies, those followers who require a more traditional form of Buddhism join an organization such as BLIA in order to maintain traditional Buddhist practices. Just as many Chinese Buddhists practice a combination of Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism, members of these two organizations are combining the philosophies and practices of two Chinese Buddhist groups in order to maintain a specific ethnic and cultural identity.

At present count, there are fifty-three Buddhist organizations in Alberta, twenty-three of which are in Edmonton. In British Columbia, on the other hand, there are one hundred and ten Buddhist organizations – seventy-eight of which are in Greater Vancouver (up to and including Langley and Mission).

Buddhist Organization Distribution in Canada

British Columbia – 112 Organizations
Alberta – 53 Organizations
Saskatchewan – 4 Organizations
Manitoba – 11 Organizations
Ontario – 137 Organizations
Quebec – 53 Organizations
Nova Scotia – 18 Organizations
New Brunswick – 4 Organizations
Newfoundland – 2 Organizations
P.E.I. – 0 Organizations
Yukon – 2 Organizations
Nunavut – 1 Organizations

Figure 5.1: The Distribution of Buddhist Organizations in Canada

Source: www.tzuchicanada

Chinese Population in Edmonton and Vancouver, 2001

	Vancouver Area (B.C.)	Edmonton Area (AB)
Total Population	1 986 965	937 845
Chinese Population	342 665	41 290
Chinese Male Population	165 680	19 880
Chinese Female Population	176 985	21 400
Provincial Chinese Population	365 490	99 095

Figure 5.2: Chinese Population in Edmonton and Vancouver, 2001

Source: www.tzuchicanada

It is evident from these numbers that there is a much larger Buddhist distribution in British Columbia than in Alberta, yet, as in life, the only constant among these numbers is change. The recent development of the Edmonton branch of the Tzu Chi Foundation is a good example of such change, as are the numerous small Buddhist groups that are brought together in Canada each year. Such continuous changes notwithstanding, in order to find suitable communities for continued growth, locations are carefully chosen by members of the Tzu Chi Foundation and The Buddha's Light International Association. Vancouver houses the original and largest Canadian location for both groups, and was specifically chosen by Cheng Yen and Hsing Yun due to its status as a bustling, modern city and global port. The growth of the Vancouver chapters of BLIA and the Tzu Chi Foundation are excellent models for the development of chapters around the world. Accordingly, in each of these chapters, leaders of BLIA and the Tzu Chi Foundation prefer to recruit their administrators from the local community, both because of their bilingual skills, and because of their knowledge of the host society. In addition, both organizations provide members and nonmembers with videos, cassettes, books, and magazines in not only Chinese and English, but also a variety of other languages.

The fact that religious communities are directly connected to ethnic identity is demonstrated by the success of these two organizations within the Chinese community in Vancouver. An influential market, Vancouver's Chinese population is a growing political and economic force that is gaining more visibility and recognition. In fact, the

Chinese community is the single largest and most influential ethnic group in Vancouver (Source: CHMB AM 1320, 2003). The Chinese population in Canada continues to show double-digit growth, and Cantonese and Mandarin are second only to English as the languages spoken most in Vancouver. Among the Chinese in Vancouver, only six percent were born in Canada (forty-eight percent were born in Hong Kong), and their individual, personal incomes exceed the Canadian average by fourteen percent. In addition, fifty-eight percent of the Vancouver Chinese have post-secondary education, compared to only forty-six percent of Canadians (CHMB AM 1320, 2003).[55]

The 1990s saw a vast influx of Hong Kong Chinese to the Vancouver area, the result of fears accompanying the British hand-over of Hong Kong to mainland China in 1997. Unlike earlier migrations of Chinese to North America, these Hong Kong Chinese were middle and upper class merchants and business leaders. Real-estate prices rose dramatically, and many neighborhoods became Chinese enclaves. As a result, Vancouver currently has the world's largest Chinese population outside of Asia (CHMB AM 1320, 2003). Based on such statistics, it should be no surprise that global Buddhist organizations such as BLIA and the Tzu Chi Foundation are establishing themselves as a major force in Vancouver. While Edmonton and Calgary are slowly following this pattern, it is Vancouver's large, successful Chinese population that has, until recently, provided the greatest continuing attraction. Nevertheless, with its booming economy and portrait-like setting, Alberta is gradually serving as a magnet for many Chinese immigrants who are seeking new lives and new opportunities.

While religious institutions are often seen as conservative and slow to change, foreign-based churches are faced with even more difficulty because of their dependence upon a religious body overseas (Mullins, 1988: 218). In the case of BLIA and the Tzu Chi Foundation, however, it is precisely because of their link to an overseas religious body that they have been successful within their host communities. With progress and growth in mind, the founders of these organizations have made a number of careful changes and adaptations to the Buddhist philosophy and its traditions, successfully incorporating subsequent generations within their fold without sacrificing the Chinese Buddhist philosophy. As a consequence, these Taiwan-based religious organizations meet Mullins' (1987) criteria for continued growth. Both the Tzu Chi Foundation and BLIA have begun to choose religious leaders from within their host community, and both are linked to large, successful indigenous organizations that are based in Taiwan. Most importantly, both have settled in cities in the West that have large Chinese immigrant populations. Along with their continued growth and adaptation in Canada, these two religious organizations have maintained strong ties to the Chinese communities in Vancouver and Edmonton, providing and reinforcing ethnic solidarity for their members.

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[55] 82% of the Chinese living in Vancouver own their own residence, while only 64% of Canadians own their own homes. 68% of Chinese own their own cars and have a home computer, 33% have a cellular phone, 35% own a fax machine, and 37% own a karaoke unit. Source: Survey by CHMB AM 1320, 2003.

In addition, because of the systematic manner in which these organizations are run, the careful modernization of Buddhist philosophy and practice are carried out within host communities around the world. Practices and policies are often reworked slightly in order to suit the needs of local members, but the chapters themselves are mirror images in whichever town or city they are reborn into. The participation in religious organizations with roots in their nation of origin creates not only a strong sense of Buddhist tradition within members, but also an increased sense of self-awareness and ethnic identity. It is large Western cities like Vancouver and Los Angeles, with their thriving ethnic communities, that continue to be successful sites for large Buddhist organizations. Furthermore, what works within one religious tradition may be adopted and utilized by another. Practices that have in the past been identified with Christian traditions (extensive social outreach, charitable acts, recruitment efforts), have been appropriated by the Tzu Chi Foundation and the Buddha's Light International Association. As Judith Nagata (1999: 233) points out, these groups have created new styles of proselytization and evangelism and they are turning these methods into central themes within Buddhism.

Although it is only within the last century that Buddhism has gone truly global, there has long been an assumption within academia that the spread of the Buddhist philosophy lies in its equality and adaptability. As Buddhism spread through Asia, into North America, and beyond, there was a conscious and distinct detachment from issues of caste, ethnic, or cultural identity. It is in a similar manner that the Tzu Chi Foundation has promoted a form of Buddhism that is based primarily on maintaining a universal appeal and a focus on charity for all people regardless of membership, ethnicity, or religious belief. In addition, while the equality promoted by the Buddha's Light International Association is partially based on compliance to strict codes of conduct, Hsing Yun has worked for many years to create a modern form of Buddhism that is universally accepted, while still remaining true to the original Buddhist dharma. The continuing efforts that Cheng Yen and Hsing Yun have made to modernize the Buddhist philosophy and globalize their individual organizations, exist along side the very real results of the primarily Chinese-only membership of these two groups. After months of research and interviews, it was evident that the goal of these two organizations is very different from the results on the ground. While creating and maintaining ethnic solidarity was not the aim of these two religious leaders, in these unique instances, religion and ethnicity have come together to both globalize a religion and maintain the member's ethnic identity and primary traditions.

In the most general sense, globalization is simply a matter of increasing long distance interconnectedness across national boundaries and between continents (Hannerz, 1996: 17). However, globalization and modernization are not only distinctly different, but also notably complex concepts. As I have previously discussed, globalization does not always bring change, and may simply relate to the creation of new locations of a religion around the world. Modernization, however, necessarily implies change, and often pertains to the modifications or adaptations that are consciously made to a practice or religion in order to maintain its desirability in the face of global 'progress'. The founders of BLIA and the Tzu Chi Foundation have established their goal as the *globalization* of the Buddhist dharma (establishing a following around the world), and they have worked towards this aim by *modernizing* the Buddhist philosophy (making modifications and adaptations to the Buddhist philosophy). It is through such careful efforts that Cheng Yen and Hsing Yun have established successful chapters in communities around the world.

Ulf Hannerz (1996: 19) has argued that in the late twentieth century there are aspects of the global encounter that have changed the rules of the game for cultural organizations. The mobility of human beings and the media have not only made them more effective in reaching across time and space, but have also increased their capacity for handling a variety of symbolic modes. According to Hannerz, it is in part due to these media and transport technologies that much of the world has become a single field of constant interaction and cultural exchange. Both BLIA and the Tzu Chi Foundation have used migration and mass media in their efforts at spreading the Buddha's teachings. Fo Guang Shan goes so far as to have media and recording studios available within its temple walls, and Cheng Yen's organization has produced numerous television and radio programs. As Appadurai (2000: 3) has argued, such electronic media have changed the wider field of traditional media, thus offering new resources and disciplines for the construction of "imagined selves" and "imagined worlds". These two transnational organizations have attempted to create a world in which its members view humanity through the same lens. Hsing Yun, especially, is attempting to create a following that confines themselves to the ideas and activities that fall within the guidelines of his commentary on the Buddha's teachings.

Unlike the focus Hsing Yun has placed on deliberate, prolonged dharma study, Cheng Yen has steered her organization towards the remaking of members' lives through their works of charity and compassion, and drawing new members through stories (testimonials) of their own experiences. As a consequence, Cheng Yen has created a sphere of action that Hsing Yun has not yet been able to match. An important aspect of this is the manner in which Cheng Yen has adapted traditional Buddhist practices in order to create a philosophy that does not conflict with domestic life. This has given female members the opportunity to maintain their status of wives and mothers while also providing members of local communities with charity, medicine, education, and culture. While Hsing Yun has also made significant strides in adapting Buddhism to the modern age, he has chosen to focus his attention on the rationalization and standardization of Buddhist life and practice. Hsing Yun's form of Buddhism operates within the modern world, yet it also focuses on committed long-term study and practice, along with membership in a traditional monastic sangha. Because of his own love for books and studying the sutras, Hsing Yun expects a similar focus from his followers. This expectation makes it difficult to attract and keep members who have no desire to dedicate their time to long term Buddhist study. Furthermore, there is a strong possibility that because of BLIA's traditional expectations, non-Asian, Western members may be discouraged from joining the organization, tending instead to practice Buddhism on their own or to join those groups which allow open-ended, less structured membership.

The state of academic theory and research on ethnic minorities in Canada has changed over the last thirty years. Students of ethnicity in Canada have become aware of the complexity involved in ethnic identification. There has long been an academic debate regarding whether ethnic churches are helping immigrant groups create and maintain their solidarity and identity in the face of Westernization by not adapting or modernizing, or if on the other hand, they are losing important traditions and ethnicity by modernizing their practices in order to maintain membership numbers. Alan B. Anderson (1982: 7) has argued that criteria for the study of ethnicity should never be utilized without taking subjective attitudes into consideration. Similarly, he contends that ethnicity and ethnic group affiliation should not be overemphasized or taken for granted by the objective classifier. Nevertheless, when analyzing the evolution of Chinese Buddhism, it is unrealistic to disregard or omit the subject of ethnicity. The future of the Buddha's Light International Association and the Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation is more complicated than simply the evolution of an "ethnic church", and the results of my specific focus on these two groups is a unique understanding of the link between the membership in an ethnic church in the West, and the maintenance of ethnic solidarity.

Religious identity often emerges from the realms of communication and socialization. In the case of these two examples, religion and ethnic identity have become universal and pervasive, even as the founders are striving to include other cultures and ethnic groups. While the goal of Cheng Yen and Hsing Yun was to create a Buddhist philosophy that is appropriate and sustainable within a social and economic climate that is different from the one in which it emerged, they have very different motives and methods in achieving their desired results. As I have previously demonstrated, the Tzu Chi Foundation places a priority on volunteer work and a hands-on approach to spreading the dharma, believing that daily acts of compassion are more important than understanding complicated sutras. Members of the Buddha's Light International Association, on the other hand, spend much of their time attending services and discussing the teachings of Hsing Yun, who they believe offers the correct path of spiritual enlightenment.

Nevertheless, as in Canada, while membership numbers have increased in these chapters, non-Asian membership has not. There are currently only a handful of non-Asian members in each of the BLIA and Tzu Chi chapters around the world, and in many instances there are none. However, while these global Buddhist organizations have not yet realized their goal of increased multi-ethnic membership, they have certainly demonstrated an ability to grow and thrive while also maintaining Chinese traditions, influencing younger generations, *and* adapting to Western culture and society. In other words, the Tzu Chi Foundation and the Buddha's Light International Association are examples of how ethnic churches are closing the gab of the debate. These two organizations are doing both: they are adapting and maintaining, and in doing so, they are continuing to grow. Moreover, these adaptations are occurring not just in chapters in the West, but are in fact beginning in Taiwan, where Buddhism has been practiced in a traditional manner for generations. Hsing Yun and Cheng Yen have recognized the needs of their followers and modified Buddhist practice accordingly.

Historians and religious scholars have yet to focus sustained attention on the religious lives of Buddhist groups such as those that draw their inspiration from their own regional traditions and folkways. Buddhism plays an integral role in the formation of personal and social identity for immigrant groups, and in doing do it provides emotional stability and a sense of continuity. Membership in the Tzu Chi Foundation and the Buddha's Light International Association, regardless of their differences, provides Chinese immigrants and converts with a source of acceptance and pride. As a result, participation in these religious groups has become a source of unity and growth, rather than simply the social and cultural adaptation, generational change, and Anglicization that is suggested by Fishman (1972) and Seager (1999). Nonetheless, it is evident from these two organizations that there is a growing opportunity for religious leaders to reach beyond their respective ethnic groups, gradually making connections with Western Buddhist converts through their contributions to the general development of Buddhism in Western society. The transnational nature of these two organizations is evident in the attitude that members have taken with regard to their own ethnic identity. While both Buddhist organizations originated in Taiwan, Hsing Yun is originally from mainland China, as is Cheng Yen's first Buddhist Master. Additionally, members of the Canadian chapters of these groups emigrated largely from Malaysia, mainland China (Hong Kong, specifically), and Taiwan, yet when questioned they identify themselves as Chinese and their organization as a Chinese Buddhist group. Given the academic debate recorded by Huang and Weller (1998), Jones (1999), and Nagata (1999), and the political ramifications regarding Taiwan's existence as a distinct entity from mainland China, this particular ethnic identity is striking. During my interviews I was repeatedly told that a discussion of politics is not welcome in a discussion of Buddhist philosophy, and that members of BLIA and the Tzu Chi Foundation view themselves as Chinese members of a global organization. This viewpoint is demonstrative of both the ethnic identity that is reinforced by membership in these organizations, as well as the transnational nature of groups that are based in a single location and then expand progressively outwards. The Tzu Chi Foundation and the Buddha's Light International Association are *transnational* because they are based out of Taiwan, yet have chapters and members among nations around the world. Consequently, the efforts of Cheng Yen and Hsing Yun have resulted in thriving Chinese Buddhist communities in both Canada and numerous other countries, regardless of the poor success thus far of creating a self-sustaining bridge to Western hearts and minds.

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Appendix One

Cheng Yen's Story of Compassion (as told by Douglas Shaw)

One day in 1966, Master Cheng Yen went to see a sick follower at a hospital in Hualien. At the hospital, she saw a pool of blood on the floor. People walked past it, not caring at all. Surprised, she asked, "Why is there a pool of blood on the floor?" Someone told her that an aboriginal woman living in the mountains had had a miscarriage, so the family walked eight hours to carry her to the hospital. When they got there, the hospital required an NT$8,000 [then US$200] deposit fee before surgery could be performed. The woman did not have any money, and the hospital did not want to take a risk either, so her family had no choice but to carry her back home.

When the Master heard this, she felt dizzy with sorrow and had to sit down. She wondered whether the woman would live or die, and whether her return would cost one life or two. And all because of the money. An overwhelming sadness arose in her heart. On the way back home, she kept her tears inside and thought that she must do what was needed in life. But as a poor nun, her own strength was limited, so what could she do to help those poor and suffering people who had no one to depend on?

A short time later, three Catholic sisters went to visit her. The nuns felt that the Master was a nice person but lived such a hard life. They wanted to persuade her to join the Catholic Church. They felt that Buddhism did not do anything concrete to deal with the problems of society. Most Buddhist disciples only sought to improve themselves, and very few of them cared to add to the benevolence under heaven. Only the love of Jesus Christ, they believed, could redeem people from the misery of the world.

Master Cheng Yen believed that Buddhism taught people to love not only human being but all living creatures. However, the sisters said that although it could be said that the love of Catholicism was only for humans, the Church had nursing homes, hospitals, and schools. Even remote mountain areas and on distant islands, you could find Catholic priests and sisters helping the poor with food and clothing. What about Buddhism?

The Master was tongue-tied. She could not answer. She could only say that Buddhism talked about "giving without obtaining fame", and that many people who engaged in charitable activities anonymously were in fact Buddhists. The three sisters said that there were indeed many kind people in Buddhism and the Buddhist teachings were also very good. But why couldn't they be brought together to do things for society?

These words from the nuns touched the Master's heart, and she decided to bring the two together. This was the beginning of the Tzu Chi Foundation.

Appendix Two

Venerable Master Hsing Yun's Publications

1. How I Practice Humanistic Buddhism
2. Being Good: Buddhism Ethics for Everyday Life
3. Where is Your Buddha Nature?
4. Only a Great Rain: A Guide to Chinese Buddhist Meditation
5. Cloud and Water – An Interpretation of Ch'an Poems
6. Handing Down the Light
7. Lotus in a Stream
8. Humble Table, Wise Fare – Gifts for Life
9. Describing the Indescribable
10. Contemporary Thoughts on Humanistic Buddhism
11. Buddhism – Pure and Simple
12. Hsing Yun's Ch'an Talk (four volumes)
13. Epoch of the Buddha's Light
14. The Carefree Life
15. Humble Table, Wise Fare (I & II)
16. Historians Ch'an
17. Cultivando O Bem
18. Con Sumo Gusto
19. Bereitschaft des Herzens
20. Immer Willing
21. Happily Ever After
22. Perfectly Willing
23. The Philosophy of Being Second
24. Where There is the Dharma There is a Way
25. The Lion's Roar

Note: Many of these books are only available in BLIA libraries and bookstores in the United States and Taiwan. Similarly, many of these books have yet to be translated into English.

Appendix Three

Hsing Yun's Guidelines, Procedures, and Conduct

A. Guidelines for a meeting

1. BLIA members should attend a variety of meetings. When members attend an activity or gathering, they should be on time, or arrive early, if possible. The organizer of the meeting should also be on time.
2. BLIA members should wear their vests when attending meetings and activities. This encourages a team spirit.
3. At the beginning and end of every meeting, members should sing the Anthem of the Triple Gem to affirm the beliefs of BLIA members.
4. During a meeting, the president's speech should be concise and clear. Reports should last between three and five minutes. Either at the very beginning of a meeting or in the middle is the best time for guest speakers to present their information.
5. When a sub-chapter has a meeting, the president acts as chairperson. Seats should be provided for previous presidents, advisors, consultants, and VIPs.
6. When holding a meeting, the secretary should have a representative record the minutes.
7. All resolutions passed during a BLIA meeting should not contradict the bylaws of local BLIA chapters and sub-chapters.
8. BLIA members should enthusiastically join all meetings. If members are unable to attend, they should let the organizers know. During the course of a year, each member should try to speak at least three times, rather than only listen.

B. Specific Rules of conduct

1. Members should not borrow or lend money. If they operate a business together, they should have a formal contract. Their profit and loss should not have anything to do with the BLIA.
2. BLIA members should not use BLIA meetings to conduct non-BLIA business with each other.
3. Without the approval of headquarters, BLIA members should not receive private donations.
4. When BLIA members join together, is at best to have at least three people in a group.
5. If BLIA members are invited to join community or monastery activities, they should be assigned by their sub-chapter president. The BLIA vest should be worn.
6. When it is time to celebrate the Buddha's Birthday, the New Year, a member's birthday, or other special occasions, members can show their respect by mailing congratulatory cards issued by the BLIA
7. When there is a marriage, a funeral, or an occasion for celebration, members can actively assist or join in the chanting. They should not take a donation.
8. Members of the BLIA can participate in weddings, funerals, celebrations, and

chanting activities for each other. However, members should not perform dharma functions or repentance ceremonies.

9. The members of the BLIA should follow these seven principles of behavior:
    - A. Do not borrow or lend money.
    - B. Avoid improper conduct between men and women.
    - C. Avoid negative thoughts and negative views.
    - D. Avoid gossip.
    - E. Do not start rumors or make trouble for others.
    - F. Avoid involvement in Sangha business.
    - G. Do not arrange a dharma function by yourself.
10. If there is a conflict between BLIA members, they should resolve it by using the seven ways to resolve disputes.

C. Social Relationships

1. When members greet each other, they should make the lotus gesture, and when addressing each other they should say, "Upasaka", "Dharma brother", or "Dharma sister".
2. Each month, BLIA members should make at least three calls to other members to discuss the dharma, and show concern by visiting each other.
3. The president should communicate with local monasteries and the headquarters if members of the BLIA are having weddings, funerals, or other celebrations, in order to invite monastics to chant and give blessings.
4. When members have weddings, funerals, or other celebrations, the sub-chapters can present flowers, memorial banners, or give donations to show their support.

D. Items for practice

1. Members should constantly recite the BLIA Verse, for example, each day after morning and evening chanting, before meals, and especially at a gathering.
2. Each day, BLIA members should chant the *Heart Sutra* at least once in the morning or evening. They should take Buddha's Light Samadhi Practice as their daily practice.
3. BLIA members need to be diligent in their practice, and should make every effort to study Buddhism. Members may take the Sutra Pitaka as their basic Buddhist text, which they can read and study in order to increase their understanding. They should join at least one of the reading groups in the temple so they can delve deeper into the Buddha's teachings.
4. BLIA members should read Buddha's Light prayers every day, emphasize gratitude, and make vows to enhance their beliefs.
5. To propagate the spirit of humanistic Buddhism is the goal of the BLIA. Members should read books from the Fo Guang publishing house, in order to deepen their understanding of the ideas and spirit of humanistic Buddhism.
6. Each year, both the association and sub-chapters should celebrate the Day of Buddha's Light. They can hold many kinds of activities, such as fairs, seminars, talent shows, musical performances or concerts, outdoor mural painting, or sports competitions.
7. When visiting temples, members should go to the Buddha Hall and bow to the

Buddha upon arrival and departure.

8. BLIA members should behave with mindfulness and not rush around. Always remember the Four Manners: walk like the wind, stand like a pine, sit like a bell, and lie down like a bow.
9. BLIA members should cultivate the Seven Characters: respect, tolerance, equality, joy, morality, forbearance (forgiveness), and humanism.
10. BLIA members should have the Seven Spiritual Properties: belief, enthusiasm, inspiration, joy, befriending all, compassion, and treasuring one's good fortune.
11. In their daily lives, BLIA members should practice and experience: joy and harmony, oneness and coexistence, respect and tolerance, equality and peace, wholeness and freedom, and nature and life.
12. BLIA members should cultivate the Seven Purifications:
    A. Purification of name.
    B. Purification of objective.
    C. Purification of members.
    D. Purification of motivation.
    E. Purification of relationships.
    F. Purification of language.
    G. Purification of meeting.

BLIA Purposes:

1. Raising the level of faith.
2. Guidance toward a path of right belief.
3. Increasing the opportunity to participate in Buddhist activities.
4. Widening our cultural horizons.
5. Making more friends.
6. Giving and receiving help and support during emergencies.
7. Receiving wise advise on practice and cultivation.
8. Planting merits via service.
9. Broadening the learning arena
10. Opening up one's heart and point of view.

BLIA Benefits:

1. Making new friends.
2. Gaining increasing knowledge.
3. Increased business contacts.
4. Home fellowship meetings.
5. Wedding and funeral service assistance.
6. Assistance with child education.
7. Purifying the body and mind.
8. Doing good brings good rebirth.
9. Advice on questions and problems.
10. Cultivating Buddhism together.

11. Building wisdom and merit.
12. Participating in a rare opportunity to shape contemporary Buddhism.

Joining BLIA:

A) Types of Membership:

1. Regional Headquarters: a country or region with at least four regional chapters can form a regional headquarters.
2. Regional Chapter: ten local subchapters can form a regional chapter.
3. Local Chapter: a local chapter should have at least one hundred members.
4. Group Member: Buddhist temples and schools, cultural groups, public or private organization who are in agreement with our objectives.
5. Individual Member: monastic or lay people who have taken refuge in the Triple Gems and are in agreement with the BLIA objectives.
6. Buddha's Light Household: a family with at least two generations whose members are in agreement with our objectives and are BLIA individual members.
7. Friends of Buddha's Light: social or religious groups who agree with our objectives and ideals and are willing to maintain a mutual friendship with us.

B) Becoming a Member:

1. Regional headquarters and chapters should contact the World Headquarters for application and related materials.
2. Local subchapters, groups or individual members, Buddha's Light Household and Friends of Buddha's Light, etc. should contact regional headquarters and chapters for application and related information.
3. During the organizing of regional chapters, the World Headquarters will provide advice and assistance. The organizing of local subchapters will be supported by the regional chapter.

BLIA Anthem:

The BLIA Anthem should be sung at the end of a gathering to reaffirm their goals and direction:

Our objective is to spread the Dharma.
Our belief is to tell right from wrong.
Our inspiration is the four Bodhisattvas.
Our sincere hope is to build a Pure Land.
We benefit society, broadening our horizons;
We exist as one, embracing the world.
Listen! Our pledge is that the Buddha's Light
Shines everywhere.
The Dharma waters flow forever.

Source: Hsing Yun. 2002. *Understanding the Buddha's Light Philosophy*. California: Buddha's Light Publishing.

Twelve Guidelines for Beautifying for Environmental and Spiritual Protection:

1. Speak quietly – do not disturb others.
2. Keep the ground clean – do not litter.
3. Keep the air clean – do not smoke or pollute.
4. Respect oneself and others – do not commit violent acts.
5. Be polite – do not intrude on others.
6. Smile – do not face others with an angry expression.
7. Speak kindly – do not utter abusive words.
8. Follow the rule – do not seek exemptions or privileges.
9. Mind your actions – do not violate rules of ethics.
10. Consume consciously – do not live aimlessly.
11. Be grounded – do not live aimlessly.
12. Practice kindness – do not create malice.

Specific Actions for Members:

1. Consume moderately and do not overbuy unnecessarily. Excess food often rots and has to be thrown away.
2. Maintain your car and follow emission guidelines.
3. Minimize the use of disposable plates and utensils.
4. Use glasses or mugs instead of paper cups.
5. Take shorter showers.
6. Do not litter, and reduce the amount of trash we produce.
7. Use energy-saving light bulbs or fixtures.
8. Set your air conditioner to a higher temperature.
9. Recycle old newspaper and motor oil.
10. Bring your own shopping bags when shopping.
11. Inspect your tires regularly. Flat tires wear more quickly and lower fuel efficiency.
12. Choose durable fuel efficient tires.
13. Use your car's air conditioning systems as little as possible. Automobile air conditioning systems are one of the main emitters of chlorofluorocarbons into the earth's ozone layer.

Source: Hsing Yun. 2000. *Protecting the Environment.*

Appendix Four

Fo Guang Shan World Buddhist General Examination (sample questions)

Adult Class:

Part One – Essay Topics

1. Explain the relationship between the five skandas and our body and mind.
2. Please explain the practice of Humanistic Buddhism in relation to the Bodhisattva Path.
3. How should Buddhism be propagated in the modern world?
4. According to the Diamond Sutra, what is the meaning of "being free from the idea of an ego entity, a personality, a being, and a separate individuality"

Part Two – True or False

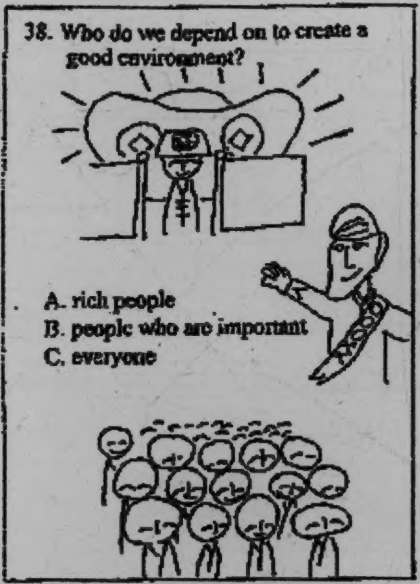
1. A human lives in the world of desire whereas an arhat dwells in the world of formlessness.
2. Lokavid (or Knower of the worlds) is one of the ten titles of the Buddha.
3. All Buddhas and Bodhisattvas became enlightened because of their vows to practice.
4. Karmic force means that good or evil karma has its determined reaction.

Part Three – Simple Answers

1. Please describe your personal thoughts about the teachings of Humanistic Buddhism
2. Give a short description of why Buddha renounced the world.
3. What is the fourfold grace in Buddhism?
4. Please describe the practice of Triyana (or Three Vehicles).

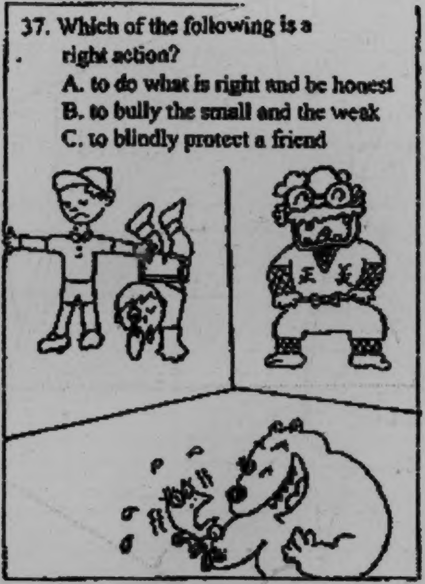
Source: Fo Guang Shan Exam Study Guide, 1996.

Youngster's Class:



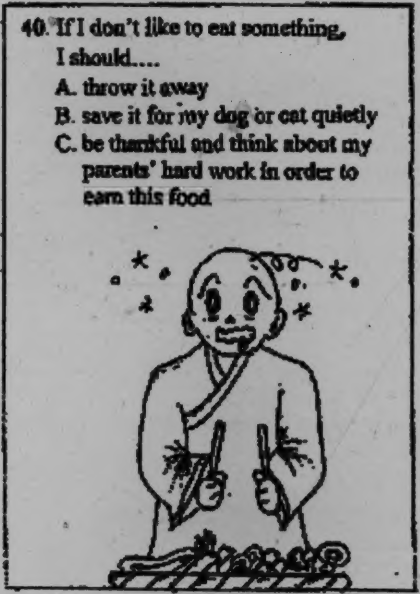
38. Who do we depend on to create a good environment?
- A. rich people
- B. people who are important
- C. everyone

Answer: (C)



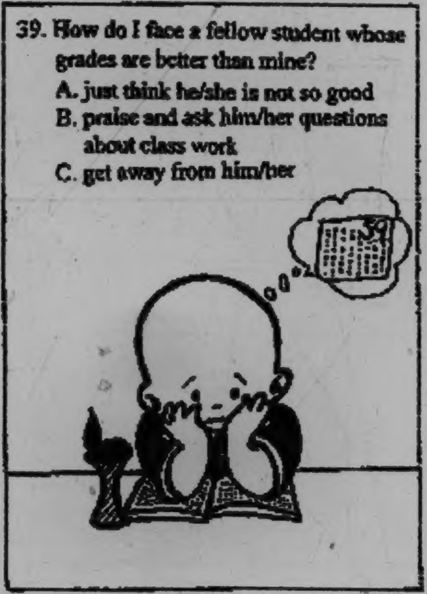
37. Which of the following is a right action?
- A. to do what is right and be honest
- B. to bully the small and the weak
- C. to blindly protect a friend

Answer: (A)



40. If I don't like to eat something, I should....
- A. throw it away
- B. save it for my dog or eat quietly
- C. be thankful and think about my parents' hard work in order to earn this food

Answer: (C)



39. How do I face a fellow student whose grades are better than mine?
- A. just think he/she is not so good
- B. praise and ask him/her questions about class work
- C. get away from him/her

Answer: (B)

Source: Fo Guang Shan Exam Study Guide, 1996.

Appendix Five

Prayers for Victims, Families and Rescue Workers of the Disaster in New York City, Washington D.C., and Pittsburgh – September 11th, 2001 (written by Hsing Yun).

Great and compassionate Buddha!
There was a disaster in New York City, Washington D.C., and Pittsburgh.
The World Trade Center has collapsed, and the Pentagon in ruins.
Have You heard the wailing of the suffering masses?
Have You witnessed the agony of the shattered families?

Buddha! Oh Buddha!
Those are cries of pleas from hell on earth!
Those are calls for help from a Saha calamity!
Great and compassionate Buddha!
There, buildings collapsed and devastation abounds amidst the wreckage and rubble.
There, buildings tumbled over and people died, anguish and shock everywhere.
So many were trapped in the wreckage, filled with fear.
So many were bound in danger, unable to escape.
So many lost their family in just one morning, with loved ones forever separated.
So many lost their lives in a flash.
They are desperate for the relief of the rescue crew!
Buddha, they are in dire need for Your blessing and protection!
For they are like lost travelers looking for a secure home;
Fearful lambs seeking for a safe shelter.

Great and compassionate Buddha!
For the many that lost their lives,
And for the many that were injured.
Buddha, we pray for you to please bless them,
To help the survivors be delivered from their suffering, and recover their good health;
To help the deceased be reborn in the Buddha land,
And progress smoothly through the nine stages of lotus incarnation.

Great and compassionate Buddha!
Please let them all realize that their physical homes go through
The stages of birth, existence, decay and perish.
Only their self-nature can sustain forever.
Please let them all understand that
Death and separation of family and loved ones befall all of us,
Only enlightenment and liberation are our ultimate reliance.

Great and compassionate Buddha!
Please bless the survivors of this disaster,
Give them the confidence to live a new life,
Let them realize where there is life there is hope.
Give them the courage to move on,
Let them understand where there is survival there is strength.

Great and compassionate Buddha!
Please give them Your blessing,
So their injured body and mind would heal quickly.
Please give them strength, so their pained spirits may regain joyfulness.
Please let them realize they ought to stand up on their feet again and rebuild their lives,
Which would be the greatest consolation for the deceased,
And would also be an ultimate accomplishment.
We also pray for this disaster not to worsen, for similar disasters not to occur again.
For you to bless the entire population,
And to help us realize the lives of self and others are interconnected,
That we understand we all affect each other in our relations.
We ought to take preventive measures and be prepared for the worst at good times,
And we must all cooperate in our work in doing so.

Great and compassionate Buddha!
Please accept my sincerest pleas!
Please accept my sincerest pleas!

Source: Hsing Yun. 2001. *The Buddhist Perspective on Compassion.*

Appendix Six

Hsing Yun's "Political Scandal"

In 1997, Hsing Yun and the Buddha's Light International Association were involved in a political scandal with Former United States Vice President Al Gore. The situation began with a visit that Gore made to Hsi Lai Temple in Los Angeles, when a photo-op turned into a fund-raiser. What developed shortly after was a scandal that, according to one political journal was based on monks and nuns writing checks (US$100,000 worth) to the Democratic National Committee. These checks later turned out to be illegal contributions (www.americanpolitics.com, 2003). The funds were returned, and Gore's official statement was that he was not involved in a plot to take money from nuns, and that the Taiwanese government was certainly not using the Buddhist Temple to launder money. BLIA followers and many political advocates viewed that a group of Buddhists (who happened to be Chinese) were being victimized by "race-baiting Republicans who were ranting about Chinese conspiracy". Others believed that Hsing Yun was part of a Taiwanese government conspiracy to influence the United States government to support Taiwan against Chinese communist aggression (www.americanpolitics.com, 2003).

The campaign contributions were illegal because the nuns were part of a non-profit religious group, and they were later reimbursed by the temple. BLIA members argue that the mistake was made because the funds were gathered on short notice, since temple organizers were embarrassed that they did not have much money to offer Gore. It is unclear if the temple leaders knew that what they were doing was illegal, or if it was indeed money laundering. The notion that one organizer in particular may have abused the traditional practice of gift giving to guests and misled the temple is unclear. The United States federal court tried democratic fund-raiser Maria Hsia (who raised the money with the help of temple leader John Huang) on five felony counts of causing false statements filed with the Federal Election Commission. Huang later testified against her (www.abcnews.go.com, 2003). Huang stated that Gore's visit had been planned as a simple community outreach event, but had turned into a fund-raiser at the last minute. Clearly, while Hsing Yun may be seen as a political figure by many, when his organization is brought into the political world it causes complications and confusion. While Hsing Yun has the ability to play an important role in global Chinese identity politics, the 1997 political scandal was taken by Hsing Yun as a warning to tread carefully in such manners.

Curriculum Vitae

Educational Background:

Master of Arts in anthropology from the University of Alberta
Fall 2004
Thesis Topic: The Tzu Chi Foundation and the Buddha's Light International Association: the Impact of Ethnicity in the Transmission of Chinese Buddhism to Canada

Bachelor of Arts in English from Simon Fraser University
Winter 1997

Languages:

Speak	Read	Write
German	German	German
French	French	French
Mandarin	Mandarin	Mandarin

Teaching Experience:

Teacher's assistant at the University of Alberta
Course: Linguistic Anthropology (anthr. 208)
Duties: Instructing the class, office hours for student inquiries, grading assignments, creating exams and a course-pack.
September 2001 - December 2001
January 2002 - April 2002
September 2002 - December 2002

Teacher's assistant at W.J. Mouat (Abbotsford, British Columbia)
Courses: English 12 and Drama 12 (thirty-five students in each)
Duties: Grading assignments, instructing the class, directing after-school plays
September 1992 - June 1993

Research Experience:

Research Assistant
Duties: Internet and library research, German translations.
December 2003 – April 2003

I obtained ethics clearance from the University of Alberta in order to conduct the Fieldwork required for my MA thesis. I have since completed this research.
July 2002 – November 2003

Pilot Study on Chinese religion in Edmonton and Vancouver
January 2001 - April 2002

Publications:

I have two academic papers in my related field that were recently published in a peer-reviewed academic journal, *Axis Mundi* (ISSN 1496-2578). This journal can be accessed at the following website address: <http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/axismundi/>

Braun, Kelly. (January, 2001). *Chinese Buddhism: A Syncretic Blend of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism.*

Braun, Kelly. (January, 2001). *Syncretism in Burma and Thailand.*

Awards:

I was awarded the Alberta Learning Graduate Student Scholarship of $2000.00 in March 2003. The award is provided by the Alberta Government for outstanding academic achievement.

I was also awarded a $500.00 research grant from the Department of Anthropology at the University of Alberta. The funding was used for research conducted during July, 2002.

I was awarded a $600.00 travel grant (Mary Louise Imrie Graduate Student Award). The funding was to cover travel expenses to the Asian Studies on the Pacific Coast Regional Conference of the Association for Asian Studies, where I presented a paper.

Finally, I received a conference grant of $1400.00 from the University of Alberta, which was used to fund the 2002 Anthropology Graduate Student Conference.

Conference Presentations:

"The Chinese Minority and Malay Majority: Politics of Ethnic Identity in Malaysia". Presented at the Asian Studies on the Pacific Coast Regional Conference of the Association for Asian Studies. This international conference was held at Western Washington University, in Bellingham, Washington.
June 21 - 23, 2002.

"The Malay Language Issue: Efforts at National Unity". Presented at the Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies conference. The conference was held at the University of Alberta.
March 8 - 9, 2002.

Related Experience and Volunteer Work:

Member of the Anthropology Graduate Association of Students (AGAS)
Title and Duties: *VP Conference* - facilitating the 2002 AGAS Conference: grant application (which was successful), booking the facilities and equipment, organizing the banquet and the presentations, arranging for advertising, arranging for the key note speaker, acting as chair for the presentations.
September 2001 – April 2002

Editor of the academic on-line journal, *Axis Mundi*
Duties: Recommending papers for publishing; editing those papers that are published.
September 2000 – April 2003

Student Mentor
Duties: Working one-on-one with a high school student interested in the area of anthropology. This included showing the student around the university campus, discussing anthropology, and allowing for participation in the graduate student conference.
January 2002 - March 2002

Invited member of the GoldenKey Honor Society
This is an international association for students and alumni of universities around the world. It is for those who were in the top 15% of their graduating class. Members are also encouraged to perform volunteer work, and are often leaders in their communities.
September 2001 - present

Volunteer reader.
Duties: Reading to elementary school children.
October 2001

Member of the Board of the Hospitals and Community Daycare (University of Alberta)
Title and Duties: *Head of Fundraising* - organizing fundraising ventures, attending monthly meetings, administrative duties, allocating funds.
September 2000-January 2002

Tutor for junior high and high school English, History, and Social Studies
September 1992-December 2001